Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine

The BIRD OF SPACE

BY EVERIL WORRELL

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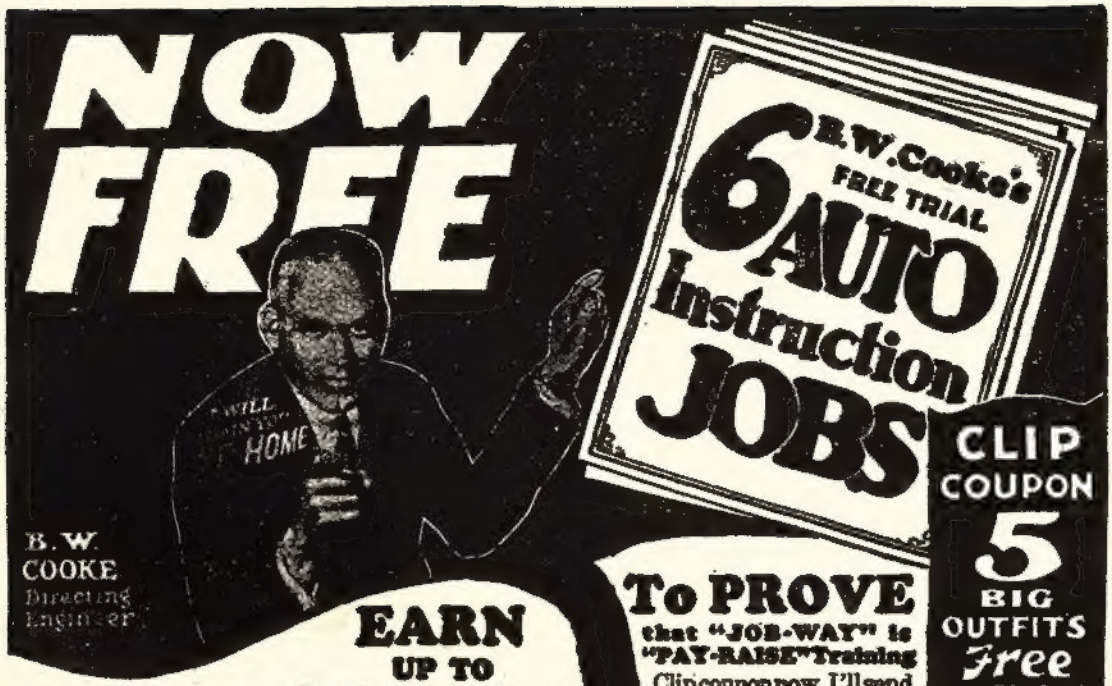

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Weird Tales

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The BIRD of SPACE

By Everil Worrell

"Before Alison's eyes the flashlight cut an oblong passage in the rock, as cleanly as a knife could cut cheese."

DUSK lay on the desolate land. Have you crossed the great North American continent, from ocean to ocean? If you have, you know where the desolate land lies, going east and west. Down south, in Arizona and New Mexico and the country thereabouts, you can not look at it without thinking of the days of the Indian fighting, when barbs of death were hidden in the sharp-cut arroyos and behind the mesas, and lurked among fantastic spears of cactus. Going through Montana and the Dakotas, where the Bad Lands are, things are on a grander scale. A Norse saga might be staged where the great, somber foothills rise steadily toward the mountain ranges. Beings of another world, gnomes and pixies, might inhabit the contorted deformities of the Earth.

But farther north, east of the Great Divide in Canada, where the train is stopped so that you can dip one hand in a westward and the other in an eastward flowing stream, and make a wish that is sure to come true, the mighty grandeur of the desolate land beggars all description. Through it the Canadian Pacific rushes down toward the east like a comet rushing through the vast distances of space. The long train with its luxurious cars shrinks to a tiny thing encompassed by tremendous, jutting forms of ancient rock. Falling behind, the long, straight track narrowing to a point, shining in the dull red of the afterglow; to the left, peaks of a range dim with distance, yet high and clear against the sky; to the right, Castle Rock.

This trip was not new to Frank Alison, but it was always a real ex-

perience. As always, he fell in love with the immensity of great spaces, and could hardly force himself to go inside. He watched the light fade, and the stars come out, and strained his eyes back toward the mass of granite slipping behind to the right. Always, as they passed close by, he let his fancy play about the "Doorway," and hunt for windows in the vertical crevices that grooved the huge face of the cliff. It would be easy to imagine almost anything, looking at that—a white hand waving, high up, as though some prisoner in distress signaled forever in vain for rescue; a calling voice, as of some person—or some *thing*——

However, on this evening his imaginings were interrupted. The train conductor stepped out on the open back platform, looking with an interested glance at the half-dozen seated there.

"You'll have to go inside, into the observation car or back to your own cars. I'm sorry, folks, but no one is allowed to ride outside this evening."

The half-dozen had consisted of three school teachers who were traveling together, another man of about Frank Alison's age (in the early thirties), and a girl, clad in red, who had interested Alison, both because she was unusually pretty and because a certain keen sensitiveness of expression had made him hope that he might scrape up an acquaintance and talk to her. The three teachers fluttered inside, wondering and talking among themselves, but without addressing the conductor directly. The girl that had attracted Alison's notice rose slowly and hesitated, then followed them, also without questioning the conductor. The other man stood up and faced the official truculently.

"You can't order us in like this without an explanation, my man," he said. "It's our privilege to ride out here just as long as we want to—all night, if we like. I never heard of such an outrage. I'll demand an explanation of the road."

"Demand and be——"

The conductor smothered the end of his sentence.

"Sorry to inconvenience you, sir, but I must insist, and the road will certainly back me up. Orders are from the road, in fact."

"Well, I demand an explanation!"

"Well, suppose you were told that a new fuel is being tried tonight, which may generate a poisonous gas?"

The truculent man subsided quickly.

"But if that's so, aren't we in danger of poisoning in our berths?"

"No, I'll promise you, you aren't. You know very well that the cars don't fill up with smoke like this platform. Practically no smoke enters your windows. Also, we pass through no tunnels tonight. So retire—and sleep in peace."

The truculent man was already hurrying through the door.

Alison started after him. The conductor was standing, looking out thoughtfully into the deepening night. As Alison passed, he put out his hand.

"Don't have any alarms about the poison gas," he said. "I told him that to get rid of him. He's the sort that would argue all night, and I didn't like his manner. But I suppose you're just as curious as he was, and while I'd rather you didn't discuss it among the passengers, I don't mind telling you the reason for the order. I appreciated your attitude just now."

Alison had turned back, and the two men stood close together, swaying with the motion of the train.

"For the last three trips across this road, a most peculiar thing has happened, which we have managed to

keep out of the papers so far. Now I understand it has leaked out to the press and tomorrow morning's papers will have the whole thing, so that secrecy really doesn't matter any longer. What matters now is what mattered most, of course, from the beginning—the thing itself."

He paused, then turned more directly toward Alison, looking intently into his eyes.

"For the last three trips of this night train, that is, the train that passed through here last night, the night before, and the night before that, *one or two people who sat out late on the observation platform disappeared off the train.*"

There was a silence in which the grinding of wheels seemed to grow constantly louder. Then the conductor resumed.

"So far as anyone knew, they disappeared off the rear platform. They must have, for they were seen in each case to go out there, they were left sitting there by the other people who had been with them, they were seen by a brakeman after that in one case, just after the train had made a stop which it makes farther on at about 10 o'clock. Evidently they were on the train a long time after it had passed the point at which I ordered you in, but the order was that no one should remain out after dark."

"That's all right, and I'm glad you told me," said Allison. "It's astounding, though. Has anyone a theory?"

"I don't think there is any. Only that there is *something* from outside—some agency we haven't a guess at. A person—or a gang; an animal—or animals. We don't know. But we're to clear the platform, and the porter of the observation car is to keep his eyes open, also the conductor of this car; and both men are armed, although the porter probably doesn't know which end of his gun is dangerous."

Frank Alison's mind was divided between feelings of incredulity and of willingness to get inside. The conductor closed the door behind them and went back through the train. Alison sat for some time in the observation car, reading a magazine and turning his eyes from time to time to glance out at the deserted platform. He had hoped that the pretty girl in red might have stopped in the observation car, or that she might come back to it; but by half past 9 he felt sure she would not, and went forward to his car.

Lying comfortably in his berth, Alison looked at his watch and slipped it under his pillow. Ten o'clock. That was the hour at which the brakeman had seen the last of one of the passengers who had been taken. Taken—of course they might as well all have gone mad and jumped from the train. No one knew that they were taken off, and what in the world could take them off? But what in the world could activate four or five people so that all of them would voluntarily disappear, and not from one but from three different trains?

Alison shifted in bed, so that his eyes were on the crack of his curtain. The train slowed and stopped. Voices along the track came to his ear. He would leave his light burning for a while and keep his eye on that crack in the curtain. He tried to laugh at himself, but the conductor's story was not too pleasant, now when one thought about it alone in the night. At this stop, any kind of person could board the train. Thinking more seriously about it, Alison felt that the passengers should all have been warned. They should have had the opportunity to stay awake all night and watch. He would not do that, certainly. But he would hardly blame a woman who might want to, or even a man. Of course, tonight everyone would be safe enough, for nobody would be on that

fatal back platform; and yet, any agency ingenious enough to snatch its victims from the rear of a moving train might think of other original schemes, provided it desired more victims.

Ridiculous! The conductor had been stringing him! Surely it was a cock-and-bull yarn that no one in his senses could believe. Perhaps they really were trying out that new fuel, and the other man had had the truth of it, and the conductor had started a different story because the use of toxin-producing fuel should have been suppressed.

Alison shifted to an easier position and his eyelids half closed. As a sop to the alarms he had indulged in, he would leave the light burning. Too much trouble, anyhow, to snap it off. He would have to wake himself up again to bother with that. The rumble of the train was becoming muffled —a long way off—— The line of light between the dark curtains blurred into nothingness.

After that, how did he know that he was dreaming? There is a type of dream, an unreal, shifting dream, in which one knows quite well the unreality of his thought images. Strange faces leered at Alison and gave way to the faces of animals he had known, a collie he had loved that had been poisoned by a neighbor because it barked, a pet calf he had seen butchered when he was a boy, so that he had waked many times shuddering at the memory. He did not wake now, for the nightmare was not vivid enough to arouse him. He sensed that his visions were between him and reality, that they were not themselves reality. The reality they masked, as an ether dream masks the cutting of a knife, did not obtrude itself upon his consciousness for what seemed an eternity of shifting fancies.

But there came a change.

A fierce onslaught of cold, bracing air, air dashing against him like an icy torrent, clear air that blew away a heavy fog from his brain, and sickly fumes from his nostrils.

For God's sake, where was he?

A violent effort at readjustment, and sudden realization wrenched his reason.

Alison swung, suspended by a sort of halter, *outside* the sleeping car. Alongside him, with its long row of dimmed lights, rocked the car; he glimpsed behind and in front the dim bulk of the forward and rear cars; he heard the deafening clangor of the iron wheels, smelt the pungent tang of coal smoke. Just below him, in line with the nearly closed, screened windows, curtained to below the top of the screens, yawned a square hole of light big enough to permit the passage of a man's body. Why, there, inside, lay his wallet and the book he had decided not to read! Alison struggled mightily, but was immediately conscious of an upward jerk. He was being drawn up to the top of the coach.

The complex motion sickened him. Now that he was used to the fresh air, a dizzy languor stole over him again. He remembered, vaguely, the story the conductor had told. He made a connection, but had no strength to struggle, not even the strength to be alert and fearful. He had one distinct thought—that whoever or whatever had mysteriously made that yawning hole in the side of his sleeping car and gotten him out, had also drugged him. He was sick and growing sicker; too sick, in fact, to care about anything; he was faint, stupid, sleepy. He knew that he came to rest on the top of the car; he sensed that he was hustled to the end of the car, and fumbled over, and then he felt a jab in his arm; more doping!

After that, there was a dim, far-

away consciousness of another dangling in space, of a swooping fall and a heavy jar; and then he dreamed of an automobile, and lastly of nothing at all.

Out of the blackness of eternal night; up from the depths of a murky sea; out of a deathlike lassitude, Alison struggled. But there was not much light, after all.

The rough-hewn wall of a rocky chamber hemmed him in. The space enclosed was not low or narrow, yet an immediate feeling of oppression overwhelmed him. He felt immured in a massive prison; a captive hemmed from freedom by barriers as mighty as the mountains themselves, through which a long time ago—yesterday—his train had passed.

Memories began to visit him. The talk of the conductor last night; his drowsing off to sleep, and the explanations and conjectures that had been his last clear, waking thoughts; his dreams, the nightmares of the dumb brutes, the collie and the pet calf that had been killed; his awakening outside the sleeping car, and after that——

Fighting off the remnants of his drugged sleep, and defying an agonizing aching that made it torture in every limb to move, Alison raised himself on his arm.

His feet were tied, but he could twist himself freely in any direction. He saw that the dim light in the rocky vault entered through a long, narrow, slitlike window, which reminded him at once of the vertical grooves in the wall of Castle Rock, around which his fancy had played last evening. A creepy feeling, that which went with the noticing of that resemblance! Suppose by some superhuman agency he had been spirited within the solid rock, magically hollowed out for his imprisonment! Why, he had fancied hands waving from those solid crevices, more than once. Well, there were no superhuman agencies. He was kidnaped, and in some bandit's cave in a lonely spot in the mountains, and perhaps his fellow victims were near by, though that should mean the sound of voices. Unless, perhaps, they were dead, had been murdered. That brought the cold sweat out upon him.

Slowly, because of the bruised aching in his body, he turned away from the window, twisting himself to see into the recesses of the cave, if cave it was. As his eyes swept the dim-lit space, he saw two things; first, that there was a high, narrow doorway which led into another chamber, apparently darker than that in which he lay; and, second, that he was not alone.

Raising the hand on which he was not supporting himself, Alison rubbed his eyes with the back of it, incredulously, then looked again, at a figure crouched at the back of the cavern.

At least, the thing was human. When he accepted it for a reality, that was his first thought. His second, that pronouncing it as repulsive and hideous was far too superficial a classification. He had speculated more than once upon the odd variance of different standards of pulchritude, which made the African belle with her nose-ring appear far more delectable to her friends than the most charming civilized beauty. Now it flashed through his mind that, repellent as the crouching figure was to him, according to some strange, unnatural (to him) norm, it would be a fine specimen. It crouched, in a strange, rubbery, double-jointed position which was itself an offense against all accepted standards of grace, just as a knee or elbow thrown out of joint offends our esthetic feeling. Yet it was a perfection of slippery suppleness!

As these thoughts coursed through

Alison's mind, the crouching man changed his position, and glided, still half-crouching, forward. The light from the narrow window fell upon his face, and Alison started back from his approach in sudden horror. The face was *green!*

Suddenly, a paroxysm of fear shook Allison, and by a supreme effort he got to his knees. It would not have occurred to him to address the creature, but the attitude of supplication was prompted by age-old instincts. Surely it would be understood.

For a tense moment he knelt. Then, with an extreme revulsion of feeling which measured his relief, he heard the green-faced man speaking to him in his own tongue. So there was the possibility of reasonable understanding between them! He had had an eery feeling as though he might be face to face with a being of a different race, between himself and whom there might be no medium of understanding at all. The words were awkwardly strung together, as by a foreigner speaking an unfamiliar tongue, but they were quite recognizable.

"Reassure yourself, Interpreter! I have special need of you. Five and one of you are here, and none in immediate peril—you, of all least."

"The others from the other trains —are they here?"

"Those, and yourself, and a woman. The last two from the one train, but you were not in condition to see that you had a companion."

"Who are you, and what do you intend to do with me—with us? Why are we here? How did you manage it? When are you going to let us go? For that matter, where are we?"

As question and answer passed between the two, Alison felt his self-confidence returning. He could have laughed, and blushed too, with humiliation, at the impulse that had brought him to his knees. In spite of his nightmarish color, this was an English-speaking man, of controlled and gentle manner. Alison managed to shift his position to a half-sitting one, so that he no longer resembled an abject suppliant.

The man with the green face suddenly produced from the folds of a dark cloak which he wore, a long, sharp knife.

"I will cut your bonds," he said gently, before his captive's heart had had time to give more than one startled bound.

When he had done so, he sat down on the floor facing Alison, the knife once more tucked away among his garments. Alison's feet were now as free as his hands, and in spite of the dull, crippling ache of which he was still conscious every time he moved, he already was speculating on his chances for escape. However, it would be foolish to try that before he had heard all his jailer intended to tell him. The more he understood of his present plight, the better would be his chances of getting out of it, and for that matter, as he had thought a moment ago, they might reach a reasonable understanding. The sight of the knife had slightly dimmed his optimism; it was a vicious-looking weapon to be so casually produced. Moreover, as he looked the longer upon the strange face opposite him, and not very far away, he liked it less. There was a fishiness about the eyes, a coldness of expression, and above all, that ghastly color. Green, and a peculiarly livid green, that suggested to his mind something spoiled, molded, decayed.

"I will give to you my explanation, a long explanation."

The voice, Alison noticed now, was also strange. Very soft and purring, with something sinister in its softness. He set himself to listen intently, not to miss a word. And as he

listened, it would soon have been impossible to miss a word, for he could not for his life's sake have diverted his attention from the softly flowing syllables with their deadly import.

"I am not of your Earth.

"There are—your astronomers know—dark nebulæ. There also are dark worlds. Dark stars. A dark star is sometimes a dead, sometimes a dying, world. The burning gases liquefy, the molten mass hardens, cools; life springs up when the fire has long faded to darkness. If there are planets, they are cold and dead before then, but the star they encircle has become the home of life—warmed by internal heat, not by any light or warmth coming through space, as the planets were once warmed by the central sun.

"Such is my star. Dark, yet warm. Invisible to your Earth, as the dark nebulæ would be invisible but for their vast extent, great enough to blot out millions of stars. My star is far in space, but not so far as you might think."

He paused.

ALISON'S thoughts raced madly. He had read many speculations about life on other planets. He had never thought of a possibility of life on distant stars, but that might be as possible. Neither the one nor the other struck him as being very possible, for that matter. It was more likely that he was in the power of a madman. The question in his mind at this moment was to recur constantly. Was this man with the green face mad—or was he telling the truth?

"I am a Wise Man, what you would call a scientist. My name is Gorlog. I have been twice upon your Earth; this is my second trip. Long ago I came by chance to this spot, which is the best of all spots for my purpose. That other time I traveled over your continent, I listened and learned. It was then I learned of your habits, your nature, your speech. I was preparing for my present mission. It is this: to take you and the other five back with me, to the dark star that is my home—to Furos.

"You are curious over more than that," he continued softly, ignoring the violent gesture of expostulation with which Alison involuntarily acknowledged the last sentence.

"First I explain, then we argue if you wish, but that will do no good. To be short: I have an instrument which acts as your blowpipe in your chemical laboratories, but with infinitely more effect. Thus——"

From the voluminous folds of the dark cloak another object appeared; long, like a flashlight. Gorlog turned it toward the back of the cavern and pressed a lever, moving it so as to describe an oblong in the air. Before Alison's eyes, an oblong passage was cut in the solid rock, as cleanly as a knife could slice cheese. Making an adjustment, his captor repeated the performance, and the passage was deepened from about three feet to an incalculable distance through the solid rock.

"It is capable of the finest adjustment, and disintegrates whatever is desired. With three motions, I could reduce you to an invisible vibration," the green-faced man assured Alison.

In the face of this marvel, Alison was dumb with horror. The man was not mad, or he would not be able to perform such marvels. He *was* a scientist, a Wise Man with a knowledge of natural forces not yet discovered on the Earth. Then what was ever to deliver Alison and the hidden five from his power, what was to end this nightmare, what, in fact, was to assure Alison that he was not to be transported against his will to another world? Rather than that, he would get hold of the blowpipe thing

and reduce himself to an "invisible vibration." Although, in that event, it would be better to turn the weapon upon Gorlog.

But he could not get hold of it, he was sure. For the first time in his life, he was reached by the consciousness of the lonely vastnesses of the space that surrounds the Earth, a consciousness which many live and die without realizing. He shivered as though an icy wind from between the worlds had chilled the blood in his veins. When his terrible captor ceased talking, he would plead with him. He would be very eloquent. He would make him understand, and then Gorlog would not want to do this horrible thing to him and to the other five.

"Now. With this little instrument I hollowed out this place in the rock called Castle Rock."

Once more, Alison started with surprize. His instinct had been strangely true. He was in Castle Rock.

"Beyond the Rock, and beyond where the train stops later, at about 10 o'clock, I had hidden one of two automobiles which have enabled me to carry out my plan. At the 10 o'clock stop, I climbed on the back platform and rode a little way, then used the hypodermic you remember I used on you, on the one or two remaining there. I was sorry there were not more out. Just as well could I have dropped off half a dozen, where the train goes slow a little farther on. That is near where my car was kept. In it I put them, and you, and the woman I took with you, and brought all here. Last night there were none on the back platform. So I climbed on the top of the train, and took you and the woman through the sides of the car, using again my little 'blowpipe'. With a little carelessness in its use, you would not be here. I had a little tackle to aid in getting you to the top. Then, when the train slowed, I drugged you again, and using the same tackle, dropped you off. I followed with ease, for you Earthlings are more brittle than we of Furos."

Alison was thinking, desperately. This man a madman? That would be bad enough, but that was too good to be true. The story hung together. At last he made his plea.

"But why should you want to take us away with you? We do not want to go. If you come from another star, and have a means of returning there, put yourself in my place: would you like to be a captive here? It would be unspeakably cruel to detain you so. No good could come of it. And what good can it possibly do you, or your fellows on Furos, to drag us there to live out miserable, desolate, exiled existences? How will it serve you?"

"You have put the question the answer to which will distress you."

Again there was a pause. Alison sat silent, fighting down his fears, for suddenly the atmosphere seemed doom-laden. It was with an actual sense of reprieve that he realized, when the other spoke again, that the distressing answer was to be withheld.

"For a fact, I would postpone so deeply distressing you. You must have other questions to ask—where are the other five, how we shall go to Furos, such questions as those. Ask of those things, of other things, and ask not yet why am I bringing you to Furos."

"The others?" Alison had to moisten his lips with his tongue. Yes, the atmosphere was heavy with doom, and the walls of Castle Rock were heavy too, crushing his heart and his hopes, making it difficult to breathe.

"Drugged, beyond yonder narrow doorway. You may look presently. So I shall keep them until we reach Furos. You I have chosen as Interpreter, as I named you at first. I

shall explain to you, and you afterward to them."

"You offered to tell me how we are going to get there—how your science of Furos has conquered space."

The man from Furos leaped to his feet.

"Now this is something of interest to tell!" he cried. "We have no more conquered space than you, save that we have been more fortunate. You have played with the idea of inventing some mighty mechanical force which will project you from world to world as a bullet is projected from a gun, or which will limit gravity. We have worked on those ideas too, but have gotten little farther than you. But has it occurred to you that for every mechanical invention, there is a natural fact which precedes it?

"Have your people dreamed that space is already traversed, as on your Earth the horse traversed the ground over which you now travel by motor?"

Alison sat staring, fear strangely forgotten in wonder.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, before men flew through the air in ships, birds flew through it with their wings, as nature created them to do. I mean that while mankind here and in Furos dreams of flying mechanically through space, the Birds of Space do fly—naturally, as they were created to do."

Hope surged again in Alison's breast. The man was surely mad. That seemed bad enough, but from a madman there might be escape. At the worst, he could only kill him with the long knife, or reduce him to an invisible vibration with his blowpipe. He could not take him away on a journey through the empty ether to fulfil an unknown, dreadful destiny. In his relief, he drew a long breath and smiled.

"You do not believe?"

"Well," began Alison, remembering that it was better to humor the man if he were mad, "how and what does your Bird of Space breathe? How does he come to carry you around wherever you want to go? Have you many on Furos? And how many millions of years does it take a bird to fly from Furos to the Earth?"

"He breathes with his lungs, and he breathes air. How does your whale breathe? He breathes when there is air, and when there is none he waits till there is air to breathe. He has not so long to hold his breath on a journey from Furos to Earth, for as you may know, there is no resistance in space. He spreads his wings to direct his flight, and as he leaves the uppermost reaches of the air he glides in his appointed direction—and almost at once he is there. As fast as light he goes. Interstellar forces hold the stars to their course, but the Bird of Space is free. His speed unhampered by any friction,—it demolishes distance as the rock is demolished by my little weapon.

"We have no Bird of Space on Furos. He comes from far, and he knows all things that pass in the universe, or so we of Furos believe. We have no real speech with him, as you have none with your animals of Earth. But the Bird of Space, the only one we know, although we believe there are others—he lit on our star and was seen by some of our Wise Men. And we made him our friend. As you of Earth direct a horse's course, so that he goes whither you desire, so has the Bird of Space deigned to receive from me the direction of his flight; as a carrier pigeon of Earth, so will he come again for me, as on my first trip to your Earth he came and took me home to Furos.

"And now you may see those who will be companions in our flight."

Gorlog led Alison by the hand—the hand of the man from Furos was of the same color as his face, and rubbery and rather slimy to the touch—to the narrow door through the rock. Beyond it was a cavern a little smaller than the one in which he had wakened, which was almost quite dark. The man from Furos had risked only one window through to the outside world. And in the darkness he could dimly see and count five prostrate figures—three men and two women. The nearest woman's form, which lay where the dim light was strongest, was wrapped in something of a soft, red color. The pretty girl on the back platform had worn red! And something in the half-seen figure, the curve of neck and chin, reminded him of that girl. Surely it was only a fancy! It was too horrible to think of that pretty, happy thing in this connection, a prisoner like himself in the hands of a lunatic, with a horrible fate awaiting her! He turned quickly, not anxious to know definitely whether the girl were indeed the one he feared her to be. It was not as if he knew what to think of their plight, as if he had a plan of escape or hope of escape.

After a while he was given to understand that mealtime on Furos meant concentrated nourishment, and the green-faced man made a fire and cooked soup, by dropping several small, reddish-brown pellets into a pan of water and heating the mixture. After that, the day wore slowly away. When the sunset coloring came in through the window he knew it was evening. A little later, as the light was dying, the Canadian Pacific rumbled by. With a sudden leap he reached the high, slotlike window, to the bottom of which he could just reach with hand and wrist, and waved frantically. He thought that he was risking instant death, but the man with the green face merely laughed. And then he realized the distance between himself and the flying train, the thickness of the rock wall through which the window cut, and the utter impossibility of so tiny a thing as a human hand being seen by anyone on that train, even if it had been touched by the sunlight instead of being dimly made visible by the afterglow. So much for his fancy of white hands waving from Castle Rock! They might wave forever, and no one would ever know.

Perhaps at night the green-faced one would sleep. Perhaps he would neglect to tie him. Then he would at least be able to explore his prison. He doubted if the window were wide enough to permit the passage of a person's body. He had not been told what was the way of ingress and egress to the cavern. He felt sure it would be of no use to ask that. So he waited for the darkness.

Darkness came, thick, impenetrable, oppressive. And in it Gorlog's eyes shone a brighter green than his face had been, and Alison remembered that Furos was a dark star. Of course its inhabitants would have eyes like that, and see best in the dark. He spoke to his captor for the first time in hours, and asked him if men on Furos slept by night or by day.

"We have no night and day," was the answer. "As for sleeping, sometimes we sleep for what to you would be months; sometimes we wake for months. I have no desire to sleep."

Once more, Alison's heart sank heavily. Night would offer no advantages. The only hope now seemed to be that some exploring party would come to clamber over the Rock, and find the window that led into the cavern. But Alison knew well the rarity with which most of these great show-places in the desolate land were visited, except for the passage of the flying trains that offered him no hope at all.

"At least, if his Bird of Space

comes after us, I don't see how it will get to us in here," he thought, as he resigned himself to the sleep of exhaustion which he felt would bring him temporary respite from despair. "He's a little bird, if he gets through that window."

DAY followed night; night followed day. Every other day, the drugged five in the adjoining cave were fed. This was a most pitiful process. The five were permitted barely to begin to regain consciousness. When this stage had been reached, Gorlog would take them some of the reddish-brown soup, and force them to swallow it. They were always sick from the effects of the drug, and hardly conscious of their surroundings, and their faint moans and protests were harrowing to listen to. Immediately after being fed, they were drugged again, and allowed to sleep their heavy sleep for another forty-eight hours, until time for another feeding. Alison was not sure whether or not his lot was more fortunate than theirs; his was the greater consciousness of misery, and yet their helpless plight and their half-heard complainings seemed more horrible than all his own dark forebodings.

After several days had passed, it occurred to Alison that it would while away the time if he could keep a diary. He asked his captor if there were any means of writing, hardly hoping for a favorable reply. But to his surprize, he was immediately given a small notebook and a lead pencil.

"We have our methods of writing on Furos," he was told. "On Earth, I supply myself with what is available. One should not be without the means of writing, even though the need is not evident."

After all, he had no heart to write at length, and so his entries were brief, and killed little time for him. He put down only a few of his many conjectures, the oscillations of his spirit between despair and desperate hope. He put down the things the man with the green face told to him; and soon it occurred to him that if he should ever escape with that book in his possession, it would be enough to gain him admission to an insane asylum for life. For he put down Gorlog's sayings as the truth, and they made strange reading indeed!

"*August 9.* It must be the 9th, as I have been here four days, counting today. I have not learned yet why he wants to take us to Furos. I believe he would tell me if I asked again, but somehow I hesitate. His manner was so strange when I asked him before. Either that question makes his insanity more violent, or the answer is more terrible than I have been able to imagine.

"I have discovered one thing. When he was on Earth before, he painted his face and neck, arms and hands dark brown, and passed for an East Indian. To account for his rubbery physique and double-jointedness, he posed as being a double-jointed freak from a side show. And another thing: that green color is not so strange, under the circumstances. He attributes the difference in our color to the fact that on the Earth, life is sustained by heat in connection with light; that is, the light develops in animal life ruddy or brown-pigmented skins. But the darkness of Furos of course favors a contrary development. Hence, the men of Furos are green. That is natural enough. Their vegetation, however, it white.

"And one thing more. Nature's laws must be fairly consistent throughout the universe. On Earth, lack of light favors the development of rickets, in which condition the bones are soft. On Furos there is no

light, except for starlight, or that light a little stronger than our starlight which reaches them from the nearest bright star, our sun; and there men's bones are soft—like his. But the universal law of adaptation makes that a natural condition there, and their muscular development supplements the bone development.

"*August 12.* For three days I have had no heart to write. I have been too deep in the slough of despond. It was the feeding of the other captives that got me down. It is too pitiful, and reminds me of the way dumb, tied animals are hauled from the country where they grow to the cities where they are to give up their lives. Perhaps it is more merciful to keep them drugged than tied. It would be more merciful to leave them drugged, and to forget to feed them. What can he want with us all?

"*August 13.* I have discovered when he expects his Bird of Space. At the end of another week. Another week of this! Perhaps the drugged ones will die before it is over. I hope they will. At the end of the week, what will happen? Will he count the days off and then go violently insane, and imagine his Bird has come—and then perhaps kill us all?

"He remembers the period of time of its absence when he was on Earth before. He has calculated everything to a fine point. And on August 20, at night, it is to alight on top of Castle Rock. He has a dozen helmets for himself and me and the drugged ones to wear during the flight through space. The helmets manufacture oxygen, he says. The Bird is kept warm by its feathers, and by the skin covering of its body, which is adapted to the cold of interstellar space. Besides the helmets, we are to wear suits which will protect us from that absolute cold.

"The Bird, as he said before, is a sort of ether-amphibian. As an amphibian lives in water for long periods but breathes air, so the Bird can live in ether for a long time, but breathes air. I wonder what the air of Furos is like, and if we six can breathe it? I suppose so, since he breathes ours.

"*August 14.* The girl in red is *my* girl in red. I forced myself to go in this morning with Gorlog when he fed them. He will not allow me near that room without him. I believe that the opening through which we shall pass, if we ever leave this dungeon, is somewhere in that dark room.

"Well, I forced myself to go with him, and I looked at her closely. If I had any plan of escape, it would include her or I would abandon it. I would risk my life to get her out. There is no use in thinking of saving the other four, as I could barely carry one—if there were any getting away in any case. I have no hope at all. And I believe Green-Face's story, God help me!

"*August 15.* I do *not* believe in his story. I do not believe in his Bird of Space. I never will. If I see it with my own eyes, I shall believe it is some strange unknown giant bird of Earth; or I shall believe that I am mad, or that he has made me see it as the fakirs of India make one see them climb a rope and disappear into the air. Yes, he may hypnotize me into seeing it—but I shall never believe.

"And yet, last night I had a strange dream. Perhaps worry is wearing away my mind, for when I waked, the dream seemed plausible to me. I dreamed that the Bird came, and that I saw it with my own eyes. Suddenly, in the dream, the idea came to me that perhaps the men of Furos had learned to traverse space in some such way as he mentioned,

such as our scientists have speculated on; and that perhaps, to protect their discovery in their traffic with other worlds, they fashioned an ether-ship to resemble a great bird. I listened for the hum of a motor, to account for the wonder to my Twentieth Century mind; and I was almost persuaded my ears caught such a sound, when suddenly a piercing eye flashed on me out of darkness—the eye of the living Bird!

"I did not solve the enigma in my dream. But I waked believing, believing that the Bird would come, be it cleverly camouflaged mechanism or—what he says it is. I must not go mad. I know that nothing of the sort will come.

"*August 18.* I have been too horrified, too sick at heart, too nearly mad with despair, to write in this book. It is a Doom's Day Book. I have asked the dreadful question, and received his answer. I have learned his reason for taking us to Furos.

"How horrible is the habit we of Earth have of living by eating the flesh of our friends! I mean of dumb animals, but animals who are our friends. What instinct, on that night of horrors on the train, made me see in my dreams the face of the little pet calf they killed, so long ago? What made that shape visit me in my nightmare? How can the subconscious mind grasp horrors that the conscious mind can not guess at, can not realize?

"On Furos there are two races of men: the rulers and the slaves. The rulers consider the slaves theirs, to do with as we do with our cattle: to drive to work in the fields, or in dismal underground machine shops, to kill for punishment, for a whim—*for food!* Yes, that is it, I have written it. They have discovered, the Wise Men of Furos, that the food best adapted of all foods for human consumption is human flesh and human blood. It is made, you see, of just the constituents which the human body requires. So the uncivilized cannibals of Earth may feel about it—but the men of Furos consider themselves civilized! Certainly they have a degree of knowledge that we identify as one of the conditions of civilization.

"Besides working the slaves, they set aside a number of them for their ghastly market. And on Furos they are running short of slaves. We prisoners from Earth are to serve by way of experiment. We are to be tried on the dark star, and if we thrive and are found pleasing—how can I write it!—they will bring others. Their ingenuity is so devilish, doubtless they will succeed.

"These slaves raised for market, to whose ranks we are to be added, they prey upon as the vampires of Earthly legend prey upon their victims. Only here is no superstitious tale, but a deadly fact. The lords of Furos are in no sense supernatural—but living beings; *human beings!* The market slaves are kept alive and *bled,* and the blood is marketed, as we on Earth market milk. They live so for years, and their lives are miserable beyond imagination. And in the end, they are killed and eaten.

"I will write no more of these horrors. I will spend the next two days trying to devise a means of bringing death to myself and the drugged sleepers in the other cavern. If he would leave his 'blowpipe' where I could get it, I would gladly use it to end our sorrows. But he will not do that. If he did, I could make an end of him, and we others would either find a way out and escape, or else starve decently here.

"*August 19.* Tomorrow is the 20th of August. For twenty-four hours I have been nearly mad. The things he told me were so horrible, so *real,* that they all but unseated my

reason. But I have controlled myself at last. Tomorrow night, I shall know the worst. I do not believe in his Bird of Space. If the Bird comes——

"I do not know what I believe, or what I disbelieve. I can write no more. There is nothing to do but wait."

It was late in the day when Alison made his last entry in the little book and put it in the pocket of his dressing gown, which he had found himself wearing over his sleeping garments. Gorlog had dressed him in it for protection against cold in the cave.

The light was already taking on the tints of evening. Soon it dulled and faded, and from the valley came the rumble for which every day he listened with a sick hope and heartache. What theories had the officials of the Canadian Pacific formed by this time to account for the disappearance of their passengers?

Silence. The light faded. From the corner of the rock-walled chamber he saw the green eyes of the man from Furos. He stretched himself wearily upon the granite floor and slept the sleep of exhaustion and despair which was the only sleep he knew.

The twentieth of August dawned bright and clear. The narrow slit of sky was pearly-hued and then a vivid blue, the blue of mountain skies. The day wore away. Gorlog was exceedingly busy. He fed the half-conscious prisoners, and drugged them again as usual. He ate, and forced Alison to eat with him. Then he disappeared into the darker cavern, and somewhere beyond the prostrate forms near the door he was very busy moving about. Alison watched for a chance at exploration and discovery, but when he dared venture into the doorway he saw a pair of green eyes glaring from the darkness and slunk back into the cavern from which he came. His spirit was weak and broken, and he could not force himself to defy his jailer, even though he would have welcomed death. There was a quality in that baleful green gaze which affected him as the eye of a serpent is supposed to affect its victim. Perhaps it was part of the secret of supremacy of the ruling lords of Furos.

The last evening came, and for the last time Alison heard the Canadian Pacific speed past through the twilight. Alison controlled himself by a desperate effort. He wanted to fling himself face down on the rocky floor and sob like a child. But he would not let Gorlog see his tears.

Darkness fell again. But not as on other nights. For when the narrow window framed two stars, two green eyes approached Alison from the darkness inside, and a moist, rubbery hand closed over his.

"With me, on top of the rock. The others I have taken."

Without a word, Alison obeyed the guiding hand. Stumbling occasionally over uneven surfaces in the rock, he was led through the doorway into the cave in which the drugged victims had lain for so many weary days. At last he crossed this cavern, and found himself climbing upward through an even denser blackness, mounting long, uneven steps hewn in the rock.

The climb was hard, for he was weak from his imprisonment, but it was not long. They had been near the top of Castle Rock in the caves, for in a little while gusts of cold air began to fan his face, and soon they came out on the top of the rock.

"The suits which will prevent your freezing, I shall be able to fasten upon you when we are passing through the air, and also the oxygen helmets. All are here."

Alison saw a large, compact bundle lying near by. It looked bulky, but he suspected that the man with the green face must be unbelievably strong, since he had carried without sound or effort the helpless five up the steep stone stairway.

The drugged five lay near by in a row, their faces upturned like faces of the dead, to the stars toward which they were to take their unknowing, fatal flight.

The man from Furos seated himself cross-legged on a jutting ledge of rock. Alison followed suit at a little distance. The green face was tilted toward the sky, the green eyes scanning the heavens to the northward, where burned a large, white star, near it a small, red one.

"As one looks from here, Furos lies at the apex of a triangle formed by it and by that red and the larger white star. But the Bird of Space—*he* will come from the southward."

Gorlog spoke no more. And in the tone of his last remark there had been a difference from the tone he had used to Alison before. A suggestion of superciliousness. Soon, Alison would be one of the cattle of Furos, where the man who had brought him there against his will would be an overlord.

Alison drew closer about him the folds of his silk dressing gown, for the night mountain air was keen. The top of Castle Rock was flat, except for jutting irregularities which indicated its granite structure and showed the erosion of the centuries. But like a mesa, it seemed to stand above the world, apart. A fit spot for a leap off into space!

Slowly the stars swung in their westward march as the world turned toward a new day. A constellation sank from sight; another rose. The aspect of the zenith changed. No moon appeared, for it was the dark of the moon. The white and red stars near which hung Furos, star of doom, shifted toward the west.

Alison's teeth were chattering with cold and dread. He tried to think of the morning, tried to tell himself that at last he was outside of the solid rock, under the sky, with half a chance instead of none at all. He could not. He was under the spell of the green eyes, under the spell of a dreadful, unseen, lightless, dying star up there somewhere in the northern sky.

Hour after hour he held his cramped position and kept vigil with the contorted silent figure that ceaselessly watched the sky. The cold struck deeper, so that he was benumbed. Even his tension and anxiety gave way at last before the cold, so that at the last he drowsed.

And, as he drowsed, the moment arrived.

He felt, rather than saw, a dimming of the starlight. Dulled as were his senses with cold and despair, he forced himself instantly to alertness, and felt his heart beat hard in his breast as his tired eyes opened wide upon the unhelping, pitiless sky.

Something was blotting out the stars!

Black, swiftly moving, gliding nearer and nearer like a shadow of a cloud driven before a mighty wind. But there was no wind. The heavens were utterly still.

There was a great confusion in Alison's mind.

He knew that he sank, half fainting in terror, upon his face, at a little distance from the other five prisoners and their captor. He heard swift movements of the green-faced man, who was dragging his heavy bundle, and then the helpless figures of the five. And yet, all his will could not force him to move. No more than if he had been drugged, like the others. For the matter of that, perhaps he

(Continued on page 428)

ACROSS SPACE

BY

Edmond Hamilton

"As I whirled around, my eyes met a sight that froze the words on my lips in sheer surprise and terror."

PROLOGUE

IT WAS very quiet in the big observatory. High up amid the peaks of the Coast Range, no sound from outside could be heard but the whispering of the night wind, and inside, only an occasional rustling movement of the man at the telescope, who was the room's single occupant. From time to time there was a clashing of smooth metal surfaces, as he manipulated the intricate mechanism that supported and swung the great tube.

Suddenly he rose to his feet and walked across the dark room to a desk in an alcove, where he snapped on a shaded light. Seen by its indirect glow, he was an unimpressive figure, short, plump and bald, but with keen blue eyes that searched the surface of the desk impatiently for some object that eluded his gaze.

After a moment he uttered a slight grunt of satisfaction and pulled a sheet of calculations from under a mass of papers that had hidden it from view. As he studied this, pencil in hand, a look of annoyance appeared on his face, soon fading into a perplexed expression. For some minutes he examined the sheet of figures, then, with a dawning excitement, turned off the light and hurried over to the telescope, making new adjustments to its controlling machinery. And when he again took up his position of observation at the eyepiece, a low exclamation broke from him.

For more than an hour he continued to peer through the telescope, and for another hour sat at the desk, covering the surface of a pad with computations, and referring now and then to a thick book of astronomical tables that lay beside him. When he finally laid down the pencil, he pulled his chin for a moment in meditation, then reached for the telephone and gave a number.

"Hello—Williams?" he spoke into the instrument. "Here's something for your paper. Important? Well,

interesting, at any rate. Got pencil and paper? Here it is——"

For several minutes he talked steadily, then replaced the receiver, and taking his hat from a hook, snapped out the light. When the door of the observatory had closed behind him, he stood for a time on the steps outside, surveying the heavens.

The night was moonless, but far from dark, for in the clear mountain air the riot of stars above stood out in blazing splendor, and the Milky Way was a brilliant belt of light across the zenith. A distant cluster of snow-crowned peaks could be dimly seen in the starlight, like immense, white-capped giants, crouching together in a silent council. High above them hung a star of burning red, and it was on this that the astronomer fixed his gaze, standing for minutes, lost in thought.

"Interesting," he mused aloud, "and strange. Quite strange." Farther down the mountain, in the cottage that was the living quarters of the observatory, a window suddenly glowed with yellow light. The abrupt illumination caught the eye of the man on the steps, and his thoughts shifted.

"Sleep," he muttered; "should have been in bed an hour ago." And then, beholding some luscious inner vision: "I wonder, now, if any of that pie's left? Ice-box—maybe——"

The words trailed off into nothingness as he cautiously began to descend the steep path. You see him, I hope—a chubby, serious little figure, carefully picking his way down the path, intent on pie and bed.

And hours later that night, while he lay sleeping, the news was flashed to a thousand cities that the planet Mars had apparently stopped dead in its orbit about the sun, and was hanging motionless in space.

1

I FIRST heard the great news when I went down to breakfast the next morning. While many of the boarding houses in Berkeley are filled with students and instructors, I was the only person in this one who was connected with the university, and my fellow roomers evidently expected me to clear up the matter for them at once, as an assistant professor of science at California's greatest institution of learning.

When I entered the dining room, a chorus of questions greeted me, and several of the people at the table pushed newspapers toward me. I could hear the word "Mars" in their chatter, now and then, as I tried to concentrate on the newspaper I held.

Across its top ran a flaring headline, "PLANET MARS STOPS IN ORBIT," and beneath it was that first monumental dispatch from the Crosshill Observatory. I read it with dazed wonder, a wonder that was enhanced when I read the reports from other observatories throughout the country.

They were almost identical. Every telescope that had been pointed at Mars that night had made the same discovery, that the planet had seemingly stopped short in its course. From the great Washington observatory came even stranger news. It reported that the two tiny moons of Mars, Phobos and Deimos, were no longer circling the planet, but had broken away from its attraction and were continuing in Mars' regular orbit about the sun, the smaller moon now revolving about the larger.

I will admit that I was stupefied by such news, and with reason. To anyone who knows the terrible exactness, the undeviating accuracy of the movements of the planets, the thing was astounding. What could have caused Mars to stop? And how had its two satellites been able to break

away from its hold and roll on in the orbit of their parent planet, leaving that planet motionless?

But my thoughts were soon broken into by the eager questions of those in the dining room. It signified little to them that, as a chemistry instructor, astronomy was outside of my province of knowledge. They had all of the layman's pathetic confidence in the omniscience of anyone bearing the name of scientist, and they asked innumerable questions as to the cause and effect of the planet's strange behavior.

I was forced to own myself as much in the dark on the matter as themselves, though I could see that it shook their naïve faith in my wisdom for me to do so. From questioning me, they passed into a lively discussion of the event, some of the absurd suggestions that were made causing all of us to laugh.

I hurried through breakfast and left early for the campus, for I wanted to stop on the way at Dr. Whitley's, and talk the thing over with him. And now that I must bring into my chronicle a man who is now one of Earth's immortals, I hesitate; for who am I, to describe him?

Yet at that time I knew him well, and loved him, as all on the campus loved him, for though he was Dr. Jerome Whitley, a world-authority in the realm of physics for the last twenty of his forty-two years, yet he had retained that warm personal touch so often missing in scientists of his rank. He had often used his own time to clear up some intricate problem for me, and I was sure that he would have some idea, some rational theory, at least, on the strange action of Mars.

His home was several blocks down my own street, a small cottage in which he had kept bachelor's hall for years, and a few minutes after I left my own house I was knocking on his door. To my disappointment, however, the withered old Chinaman who was the butler, cook, and house-maid of the place informed me that my friend had gone to San Francisco the day before, without saying when he would return. So, planning to see him at my first opportunity, I went on to the campus.

It was one of the first fine days of June, and I thoroughly enjoyed the brilliant sunshine and soft, balmy air as I walked along. The sidewalks were crowded with throngs hurrying to work, and in the street a steady stream of autos alternately dashed ahead and stopped short at the shrill whistles of the traffic policemen. The hurry and confusion, the rush and turn of traffic, the stimulating aliveness of everything about me was particularly pleasing that morning, I thought.

Reaching my classroom somewhat early, I sat on the edge of the open window and watched the students pouring up the walks into the university buildings. They came in happy, laughing groups, arms linked with arms, busily retailing to each other the small-talk of the campus.

All through the land that sunny morning, in New York and Louisiana and Idaho, boys and girls were laughing and shouting, men in offices and factories were talking of automobiles and radio and golf, dogs were barking and children running to school, women sweeping porches in neat suburbs were chatting across their front yards of fashions and recipes and bridge.

And all the while, the shadow of doom that hung above the unsuspecting Earth was growing and darkening and deepening, like an evil cloud that was to burst in storm over the whole world.

2

LOOKING back, I think that one of the very strangest things of that strange time is the calmness with which people received the first great news of the planet's stopping. To be sure, the thing was discussed everywhere that day, and in the evening newspapers it crowded completely off the front page a notorious divorce trial that had been headlined for weeks. Also a particularly atrocious murder that came to light just then got but little space in the face of this new interest.

But as I looked over the papers that evening, I was struck with the light manner in which the thing was discussed. Solemn, meaningless editorials were written about it, humorists filled their columns with jocose references to it, and "eminent scientists" who were for the most part cheap popular lecturers advanced theories on the matter that were simply high-sounding nonsense. From the great observatories nothing was heard, except the statement that the behavior of the planet would have to be studied further before any conclusions could be drawn. And this did not interest the public, who turned to the cock-sure statements of the pseudo-scientists.

Telescopes, field-glasses, almost anything with a lens in it doubled and tripled in price that day, and when twilight came and deepened into night, streets and parks and roofs were dotted with people eager for a sight of the errant planet, the most of them having probably walked for all their previous lives without a single thoughtful glance at the stars.

As I sat on the steps of my lodging house that night, contemplating the people on the lawns and porches around me, I thought that their mood was rather flippant. One would have supposed they were waiting for some novel entertainment to be staged for them, after which they would go on to other amusements. After all, to nine people out of ten, the sky is simply a blue roof, and the stars pinpoints of light. With no conception of the vast gulf that lies between the worlds, the greatness and grandeur of the universe, the matter could assume but slight importance in their minds.

So I thought as I heard them discussing their ailments and servant troubles, and the like, while they awaited the rising of Mars. Now and then there were bursts of youthful laughter, indicating the presence of witty swains amusing their fair companions at the expense of the red planet.

But a few minutes later, when the planet swung up into view, the crowd became silent. Burning out in unheard-of splendor, its unnatural brilliance seemed to touch all with a certain awe. The ruddy hue of Mars was very plain that night, so plain that the planet was like a glowing ruby set in the dark-blue enamel of the summer night.

All around me I heard the comment, "How bright it is!" And bright it was, indeed, bright as the scarlet fires of the Aztecs, that flashed from crag to peak, an ominously brilliant crimson, the color of blood and war and hell. Even these gay groups about me seemed affected by its magnificence, a little troubled, a little disturbed.

But in a few minutes their usual temper reasserted itself. The silence was broken by a woman's laugh, and instantly the buzzing of talk began again. Little gatherings broke up and people walked slowly along the street to their homes, shouting jests and greetings to each other. Whispering couples stole away, absorbed in themselves, and down the street, houses lit up and music began, a dozen pianos and phonographs.

And I sat on the steps alone, silently watching the red planet swing higher and higher toward the zenith. For a long time I sat there, smoking, and when I rose stiffly and entered the house, it seemed very high and small and harmless. As I dropped wearily into bed, I even regretted that it was not visible through the open window of my bedroom.

Lying there, listening to the myriad whispering sounds of the summer night, I felt very safe. There were footsteps on the street outside, and now and then a low laugh. I remember that the last sound I heard before dropping off to sleep was a sudden burst of dance music from a house farther down the street.

3

I WAS lying across a railway track, bound tightly to the steel rails. Far down the track a locomotive appeared and rushed rapidly toward me. As I struggled madly to free myself, I could see the horror-stricken engineer leaning out of his cab, and loud in my ears was the clamor of the engine's ringing bell and screaming whistle. It was thundering down on me, only a few yards away, a few feet——

With a shudder of terror I sat upright and found myself in my own bed, still thrilled with horror by the nightmare I had just experienced. By the clock on my table I saw that it was only a few minutes after 4 o'clock, and I felt mildly surprized at awaking so early.

And now a great multitude of noises began to force their way into my slow-returning consciousness. I could hear several church-bells ringing wildly, and somewhere in the city a high-pitched whistle was shrieking. As I lay listening, another bell joined in the din, and another, until it seemed that all of the city was bent on producing the most possible noise.

There came cries from the street outside, now, and I jumped out of bed and ran to the window, to witness an amazing sight. The street was filled from curb to curb by a seething mob of people from the houses around, in all stages of dress and undress. They were milling about in a blind, aimless manner, in a high state of excitement to judge by their shouts to each other. I could see, too, several shirt-sleeved men who ran through the crowd distributing newspapers from the stacks they carried, and voicing some hoarse cry which I could not hear distinctly.

As I watched, astounded, a siren screamed farther up the street, and the crowd parted hastily to let an automobile race through. It was jammed with people and going at an extremely high speed.

For a moment I watched the scene below, then turned and dressed hastily, quivering with excitement. When I descended to the street I grasped the nearest man by the shoulder and shouted to him across that roaring din, "What's the matter?"

The man I had collared was a neighbor, an insurance salesman with whom I had a slight acquaintance, and his ordinarily good-natured face had a strange expression on it as he tried to make himself heard by me over the noise of the crowd. Seeing that this was almost impossible, he leaned over and shouted in my ear, "It's the end of the world, they say!"

"What!" I yelled. He nodded his head vigorously, then handed me one of the newspapers I had seen being distributed. I opened it, and as I read the headline, a hand of ice seemed to grip my heart and hold it tightly. For across the paper's top, in immense black letters, ran the words: "THE END OF THE WORLD!"

Beneath that screaming message, the whole of the paper's usual printed matter had been hacked away to make room for a despatch that was printed in half-inch letters. It read as follows:

WASHINGTON, D. C., June 4—Discovery has been made at the government observatory here that the planet Mars, which was believed to be hanging motionless in space, is in reality falling with great speed toward the Earth. No reason for this extraordinary behavior of Mars can be assigned by astronomers here, nor has it had any noticeable effect so far on the movements of the other planets.

While if it continues in its present direction and velocity, the planet may collide with the Earth, it is thought that before long the attractive power of the sun will assert itself, and the planet will fall toward the sun instead. In any case, the people of the country are implored to remain calm, as no possible harm can come to the Earth for several days, at the least, and it is hoped that during that time preparation can be made for the coming planet, so as to obviate any danger of the destruction of the Earth, or damage to it. Any persons having suggestions on this matter are asked to communicate at once with the Federal government in this city.

When I finished reading that, I said nothing, but stared with unseeing eyes at the mob around me. It was the end of the world. *The end of the world!* The long centuries of struggling progress, the civilization that had cost so much in thought and toil and blood, all would be wiped out in a few seconds by the crimson star I had watched only a few hours ago. A mighty shock, a burst of flames, and they would have disappeared forever.

Nor was there any comfort for me in that hope of the astronomers, that the planet would veer toward the sun. For if it did fall sunward, the increased heat of the sun after such a collision would burn out all life on the Earth. There was no hope. It was the end.

Fear surged through me then, for I knew that death was rushing toward me, out of the depths of space, and I did not want to die. And those people in the street, they knew it too, and they were like beasts in a slaughter-pen, crazed by their fear, voicing it in inarticulate cries.

But a thought came to me, a sentence from that despatch recurred to my mind and calmed me. What had it said, that it was hoped some kind of preparation could be made to save the Earth? That thought steadied me. If our science was worth anything, if it could do anything, now was the chance, for our great crisis had come. Could we men, with our accumulated knowledge, save ourselves from the doom that confronted us? *Could we?*

Suddenly I turned and started to run up the street, but the crowd barred my way, so I cut across lawns instead, running hatless and coatless, but unnoticed by that frenzied throng. The crowd thinned as I approached the end of the street, and as I sped along I wondered what conditions must be like in the thickly populated down-town sections of the city.

It took me only a few minutes to reach Dr. Whitley's cottage, my objective, and already breathless, I dashed up the walk and in through the door without knocking. I burst into the little library, then stood speechless in astonishment, for although the roar of the crowd in the street was quite audible here, yet a man was seated at the desk calmly surveying a large map, with pencil and ruler in his hand. A thin, middle-aged man with hair of iron-gray, whose keen, intellectual face lit up in a welcoming smile as he looked up and saw me.

I remained motionless, amazed by his calmness after the wild scene outside. Then, motioning to a chair, he said, quietly, "Sit down, Allan. I'm glad you came, for I was just going to 'phone you and ask you to come over."

4

In a second, my stupefaction of surprize had passed, and I sprang toward him.

"Whitley!" I cried; "haven't you heard the news? Have you seen this?" And I thrust the newspaper toward him.

He glanced at it, the serenity of his expression unchanging, then said calmly, "Please sit down, Allan." And as I slumped into a chair he continued, absently, "Yes, I saw that a few hours ago."

"But you realize what it means?" I insisted. "Why, Whitley, it's the end of the world. It must be!"

For a moment he did not answer, but gazed at me reflectively. Then, "You come at an opportune time, Allan," he said. "As I told you, I was just going to ask you to come over, for I wanted to give you some news of importance."

"This thing here?" I asked, and indicated the paper I had given him.

"No, not that," he answered, "but something that is equally important, I think."

"Equally important?" I repeated, incredulously. Without answering, he reached for a newspaper on the desk and handed it to me. I noticed a small item in one corner ringed with a blue pencil-mark. "But this is yesterday's paper!" I told him.

"I know that," he replied, "but read the article in the corner," and he pointed to the blue-marked item. So, folding down the paper, I read it. It was only a few lines, as follows:

Extinct Volcano in Eruption

LIMA, Peru, June 3—A radio message received here today from the British freighter Queensland, bound for Valparaiso from Tahiti, states that a volcano is evidently in eruption on Easter Island. The Queensland passed the island at some miles distance, shortly after midnight last night, and observed a column of red fire or light that seemed to be shooting up into the air from the island. No word regarding this has been received from the officials of the Chile Company, which leases the island for grazing, and it was also disclosed today that the radio on the island has not been heard for over four weeks, the cause of its silence being unknown. It is believed here that the extinct volcano of Rano Kao on the island has again broken out, which would account for the phenomenon observed by the Queensland.

I dropped the paper and looked at Whitley, perplexed. "But what is important about that?" I asked. "For God's sake, Whitley, this thing about Mars——"

He silenced me with a swift interruption. "Did you never hear of Easter Island before?" he asked me. "Think, man!"

I was about to reply in the negative when a sudden memory came to me. "Why, that's the place where Dr. John Holland disappeared, isn't it?"

His face clouded slightly. "Yes, that is the place," he said, simply. And now the whole story returned to me. It had been a sensation at the time of its occurrence, two years ago, but almost forgotten now, save by Holland's personal friends, of whom Dr. Whitley had been one.

This Dr. Holland, a young anthropologist of high rank at the university, had sailed for Easter Island in an effort to clear up the mystery that has always shrouded the place. A tiny speck of land, two thousand miles out in the Pacific, and more than a thousand from the nearest land, the island has been a great riddle for years, its unsolvable enigma being the six hundred or more great stone statues with which the island is dotted.

It is a truly amazing thing, when one considers it, those hundreds of stone figures, many over thirty feet in height, set in the grassy slopes of an island of a few square miles. More than one scientist has worked and delved there to learn the origin of the statues, yet nothing had ever been

discovered concerning the race who carved the things, nor their purpose, nor anything else that would clear up the matter. Shrouded by the mists of time, those who had placed the statues on the island had gone down into a darkness not to be penetrated by us moderns, and were passed away forever from the memory of man.

Yet Dr. Holland had been very confident when he went to the island. He had a new theory, he said, but divulged it to none, waiting until his work on the island would substantiate his idea with incontrovertible facts. What he did there, what he found there, no one ever knew, for he failed to return from one of his exploring expeditions into the interior of the island, and when the natives of the place (part of the three or four score employees of the grazing company) combed the island for him, they found no trace of him whatever.

Naturally it caused talk, his disappearing so completely on a tiny isle like that, but though a small search-party went out from the university to hunt for some trace of him, headed, as I remember, by Dr. Whitley himself, they had found nothing, and the final verdict of the party was that Holland had somehow wandered into the sea and been drowned.

A strange story it was, but a small enough matter to drag up in the face of a cosmic disaster such as threatened us. Yet when I said so to Dr. Whitley, his face became very earnest and he leaned toward me to emphasize his words.

"It may be more important than you can guess," he said. "Tell me, what do you think happened to Holland?"

The only thing I could see that could have happened to him was the death by drowning which everyone else thought had occurred, and I said so.

"You think so?" he asked. "Yet the night he disappeared, Holland was at the very center of the island, several miles away from the sea. And what do you think caused that shaft of red light seen by the *Queensland?*"

"I take it that the volcano mentioned has broken out again," I answered.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "I have a fair knowledge of geology and you may believe me when I say that my own examination of Rano Kao at the time I visited the island convinced me that the volcano is extinct beyond possibility of revival."

I was astonished by his assertion. "What other force of nature could have caused it?" I asked. "An earthquake?"

"Perhaps it was not a force of nature at all," he replied quietly.

"You don't think that men could cause such a thing?" I cried.

"I am not at all sure that it was done by men," he said. Then as my face must have shown my bewilderment, he added, "Do you think that those statues on the island were carved by men?"

"Why not? I have only seen pictures of them, of course, but I don't see why not."

"Are you so sure?" he asked. "Well, I have examined those statues, and if they are figures of men they are not of men as we know them! They are different, strange, unearthly. The ear, for instance, totally unlike a human ear, for it is a long, ropelike appendage. The faces, too: high, thin-featured, cruel-looking, quite unhuman. No, I am not so sure they were carved of men, or by men."

"But what on Earth could have carved them, if not men?" I asked. "And why in God's name are you going into all this at a time like now?"

He paused before answering, his face earnest, determined, illumined with purpose.

"Listen, Allan," he said; "suppose I told you that there might be a connection between that strange island and the falling of Mars toward us. Suppose there was a chance, a million to one chance, it is true, but still a chance, that we might save the Earth from wreck by going down to Easter Island. Would you go with me?"

I rose to my feet, electrified. "You don't mean to suggest——?" I began, but he broke into my sentence swiftly. "I am suggesting nothing, for I know next to nothing myself concerning this. But I will tell you a thing which you may not have heard yet. Three nights ago, at twenty-nine minutes after midnight, to be exact, every compass-needle in the world turned *away* from the northern direction, pointed in a different direction for a few minutes, then swung back to north again. When I heard this I went to San Francisco to verify it. And I did so. For on that night, two nights ago, at approximately twenty-four minutes past midnight, the magnetic needle swung about so that it pointed almost due south, stayed in that position for more than three minutes, then swung back to normal. Strange, is it not? Almost as strange as the falling of Mars toward us.

"And ships far out in the Pacific reported the thing too, but they said that the needle pointed *east!* And ships in the Atlantic said that it had happened to them also, but that the needle's direction in those few minutes of deviation had been *west!* You see what it meant? Each night something was attracting all of the compass-needles for a few minutes, and to find the center of that attraction I needed only to draw lines on a large-scale map, drawing one almost exactly south from San Francisco, others east from the ships in the Pacific, others west and southwest from the ships that had reported the deviation in the Atlantic. Where the lines intersected, there must be the center of attraction, the unthinkable power that was nullifying the magnetism of Earth's north magnetic pole, that was seemingly removing that pole to a totally different spot on Earth, for a few minutes each night. And the lines on the map intersected exactly at Easter Island!

"And last night, only a few hours ago, the thing was repeated, for about nineteen minutes after midnight, while I watched the needle of my compass, here on the desk before me, it swung suddenly south, quivered in that position for a few minutes, then turned back to its accustomed northerly direction. I asked myself, what did it mean? What force on Easter Island was attracting every magnetic needle in this manner? And another thing puzzled me. The phenomenon occurred earlier each night, some four minutes earlier. Why so? I wondered. And then came these newspapers, spreading the news of the falling of Mars toward the Earth, and I seemed to see a connection. A theory shaped itself in my mind, a wild hypothesis that rests on three little facts: the shaft of red light seen by the *Queensland,* the veering of the magnetic needle toward the island at the same time, and a curious assertion which Holland made to me before he sailed for the island. I will not tell you more now. I can not tell you more, for I know scarcely more myself. Yet I am asking you, will you leave for Easter Island with me today, this morning? We can get a hydroplane in a few hours."

He awaited my answer, but I was so dumfounded by this sudden proposition that I was silent for a few moments, and evidently construing my silence as unwillingness, he added. "It may be the one slender hope we have of saving this world of ours. It may be that the thing on the island has no connection with the falling of

Mars; perhaps even if it has we can do nothing, but still it is a chance! And surely worth taking, when we have all to gain, and nothing to lose."

"I'll go with you, of course I'll go!" I cried. "It was just that my head is spinning already, and this strange thing you tell me——"

Again that gentle smile illumined his face. "I know, my boy," he said, then, walking to the window, flung it open and called me over to him, so that we gazed out together.

The sun was just rising, and I saw that the throngs on the street had disappeared, leaving it silent and deserted. That first mad touch of panic at the dreadful news had passed, and people now sat silently in their homes, chilled by their ever-growing fear. I thought of the happy scene on that street only the night before, and it sickened me that all of that peace and gladness should have been struck down so quickly, and that the laughing groups of the night before should now be watching in dumb terror the approach of a dreadful death.

Down the unnaturally silent street, birds were singing and flashing through the trees, joyously greeting the morning sunshine. I felt Whitley's arm across my shoulder, and it strengthened me. And his gentle voice, as he, too, gazed thoughtfully at the sunny beauty of the morning.

"Our splendid Earth! Surely it is worth fighting for. And these poor, frightened children!" There was an infinite sadness and pity in his voice, and God knows it was reflected in my heart.

Five hours later we were roaring south in a mighty hydroplane, winging across the Pacific to Easter Island in a headlong race to save the world.

5

No one in the world behind us knew of our journey except the navy officials at San Francisco, to whom Dr. Whitley had applied for a plane to take us to the island. He had told them only that if we could get to the island we might have a chance to stave off the threatened wreck of the Earth, and without asking more, they had instantly put at our disposal a great bombing plane that was quite capable of making the three thousand mile trip to the island, having been designed especially to carry mail between San Francisco and Hawaii, and being in complete preparation for its first trip. A young officer, Lieutenant Rider, was our pilot, and he assured us that the plane was capable of making the flight in less than thirty-six hours.

So, except for a few men at San Francisco, the world knew nothing of our expedition, or our existence even. Nor, if it had known, would it have cared very much, for ours would have been only one of innumerable plans that were advanced to save the Earth. It seemed that every charlatan on the globe came forward with his own scheme, and wild and crazy enough these plans were.

Some ingenious American even suggested that vast numbers of airplanes and balloons be built as hastily as possible, so that people could ascend several miles above the ground, before the collision, and thus save their lives! And that scheme was backed by millions of frantic people, who could not be convinced that the collision would result in both planets flaming out into a new sun with the shock of contact.

And other and wilder plans were proposed, that giant guns be trained upon Mars to blow it to pieces when it got near enough; that the moon be hurled out to meet the red planet, none knew how; that people put on diving-suits and get in submarines, and thus be safely under the ocean's surface when the shock came. All of

this came to us over the radio of our plane, as we rocketed across the Pacific, and it seemed that every hour brought wilder news.

A thrill of hope shot through the world when in Rome, an Italian astronomer came forward with the announcement that after exhaustive study, he had discovered that Mars was not falling toward the Earth, but in the opposite direction, and that the astronomers at the Washington and other observatories had been deceived by a curious optical illusion. The whole world waited, breathless, for further news, then fell back into the abyss of fear when it was discovered that the Italian astronomer was only a shoemaker who had seized this wild hour to make himself famous. A raging mob tore the man to pieces.

When night came we were still speeding south, and the steady song of the three mighty motors, the back of our pilot in front of us, and the sheet of darkness around us, these were all our world. Then came the stars, making dimly visible the tossing ocean, far below. A time of tense waiting, and we each sighed when Mars swam up above the sea in flashing crimson brilliance, brighter than any star ever seen by man before.

In the world behind, the sight of that burning star worked havoc, and we received appalling reports of rioting and disorder. On all the Earth, law had seemingly ceased to function, and there were wild scenes as the world rocked toward its doom.

Murder was rampant, and the dwellers of the underworld came out to rob and burn and kill, almost undisturbed. We heard that Chicago was a mass of flames, that the roads were choked by vast crowds leaving the city, striving to save their lives, if only for a few days.

In Washington, a wild mob besieged the government offices, begging and praying that the disaster be averted, and when the president refused to make empty promises, the crowd rolled up to the Capitol with torches alight for burning, but were held back by hastily summoned soldiers.

Everywhere, in city and village and countryside, there were great prayer-meetings and revival services. As hope waned, millions turned toward the promises and comfort held out by religion, and the churches were crowded with praying masses. Many who had formerly watched street evangelists in amusement, now fell to their knees in the street and prayed, and all those who lifted tear-stained faces to the heavens saw above them the fiery, menacing planet that swung ever nearer.

Wildest place of all was New York City. There were prayers there, too, and the cathedrals were jammed, but as a whole, the temper of the people there was different. Discarding all hope, those in the metropolis set out to make their last hours their most joyous, and there were scenes of unbridled license. Music was blaring, and huge crowds were dancing, and a frenzied throng surged through the canyons of the city in utter abandonment. The great city was going to its death in a blaze of light and splendor, and though it was mad, it was, too, magnificent.

Now and then we got fragments of news of Europe and Asia. The cables were deserted, it seemed, but most of the radio men had stayed at their posts and an occasional message got through. London was burning, organized gangs were looting and killing in Paris, all Europe writhed in fear. There were vague rumors of Africa, where great hordes of fear-maddened blacks were slaughtering the whites and each other, indiscriminately, and of India, where human sacrifices were being offered up to the

Blood Star, and of China, where there was a vast ringing of bells and detonation of firecrackers to scare away the falling planet.

All that night, through the next day, and far into the night again, we continued to receive news of the world behind, a world gone mad with fear of the death that was hurtling toward it. It was 10 o'clock of our second night when we disconnected the radio and turned our attention to the sea below, for by that time we were arrowing through the velvet darkness on the last hundred miles of our trip.

6

PEERING intently into the black gulf below, Dr. Whitley suddenly made a signal to the pilot with one hand, and instantly the song of the motors died and we drifted along as silently as a wind-caught leaf. Turning then to me, he pointed over the side of the plane, without speaking.

At first I could see nothing in the thick darkness, but gradually my eyes made out a black irregular mass that stood out indistinctly in the starlit sea, far below. And we were spiraling down to it as silently as a ghost.

Nearer and nearer we came, until I could make out the roughly triangular shape of the island, a triangle each of whose sides was about ten miles in length, I judged. Our pilot was evidently aiming the plane at a little bay near one corner of the island, and as we sank swiftly down toward it, the great volcano on the very tip of that corner seemed to rise higher and higher, so that when we neared the surface of the ocean it loomed above us, a tremendous, dark mass, the mile-width of its crater at the top making its height of thousands of feet seem low and squat to us.

As I gazed, Dr. Whitley jerked a thumb toward it and whispered, "Rano Kao," and the words redoubled my interest. Certainly it looked like anything but an active volcano, for no spark of light showed on its dark mass, nor anywhere else on the island, for that matter. Had we had our long trip for nothing? I looked at Dr. Whitley, but he was keenly watching the shore, which we were fast nearing.

With a slight splash the plane broke the surface of the water and glided across the bay, bringing up directly beside a tiny point of land that projected from the shore, forming a natural landing. And while the plane lay beside it, swaying gently, we made our plans, speaking in whispers.

Our decision was that Lieutenant Rider should stay with the plane while Whitley and I made a reconnoitering trip to the inhabited part of the island, with the object of getting in touch with the people on the isle, if any were left. We had seen no light or other indication of their presence, but felt that some of them at least must still be there, as it would be impossible for them to leave the island.

So, buckling on heavy automatics, we jumped onto the little headland and started up the shore. The whole island seemed as silent as the grave, except for the washing of the waves on the beach, and the sighing of the wind. As I followed Dr. Whitley, I glanced up and noticed that Mars was almost directly above us, its evil crimson beauty making the other stars seem pale and weak. I even fancied that I could see it getting bigger as I tramped along, and that thought made my mood a despairing one.

My companion soon left the shore and started inland, up a long, grassy slope, motioning silently for me to follow. For some minutes I moved along

behind him, then shrank back suddenly, for a gigantic figure had abruptly loomed up out of the darkness before us!

My pistol was out in a flash, but Dr. Whitley's low chuckle stayed my hand. He was standing directly beside the figure and beckoned me to come forward. When I did so, cautiously enough, I found that the thing was only one of the great stone heads which have made the island famous.

As I surveyed it in the dim light, the sight of it did nothing to relieve my fearfulness. I suppose it was twenty-five feet in height, a huge head of stone projecting out of the ground, the rest of the statue being buried beneath the surface. How large it must be, I thought, when the head alone was of that size!

And it was a devilish thing to see. High, thin features, with deep-set eyes and a saturnine expression on its long, narrow face, like nothing I had ever seen before, though it suggested to my mind certain of the crude, medieval demons that are pictured in European cathedrals. In a low whisper Whitley pointed out to me the long ear, if ear it was, an elongated, ropelike mass that extended on each side of the face from the forehead down to the jaw. Certainly he had been right, I thought, in his statement that the ear was totally unlike any conception of a human ear. And I doubted now if the statues were intended to represent humans at all.

We came across several more of the stone figures as we pushed up the slope, all of them facing down toward the sea, and I had queer fancies about them as we stumbled on. But I forgot these when we drew into sight of a cluster of small cabins, that lay before us in complete silence, with no sign of human life about them.

Stealthily, soundlessly, we crept down toward them, but our precautions were needless, for we found no living thing in all that place. According to Dr. Whitley, more than a hundred workers resided on the island, but certainly none of them were still in their little village, nor did we glimpse any of the herds of sheep, the grazing of which is the island's single industry.

In the huts, though, were indications that men had been there not long before. It seemed, too, that they must have left very suddenly. Cooking had been left to burn on long-dead fires, blankets were flung aside, there were numberless signs of a sudden exodus on the part of the workers.

One thing else we found that I must mention. That was a curious, somewhat greasy white powder that lay in smears on the ground outside, here and there around the huts. There were several dozen such smears in the one street of the little village, and we could see more between the huts. What the stuff was, neither of us could determine by examination, so we gave it up and left the village to its darkness and death, heading now for the place called Mataveri, where was the office and home of the manager of the island, so Dr. Whitley said.

MATAVERI was less than a mile from the workers' huts, and as we came near enough to see it in the dim starlight, I noticed that the long, low building was surrounded by trees, the only trees on the island, in fact. Directly behind this bungalow rose the mighty bulk of Rano Kao, its sides sloping up at a steep slant. I gazed speculatively up the slope as we drew near the bungalow, but a call from Dr. Whitley brought me to him quickly.

Before him, on the edge of the veranda, was another smear of the white powder, and lying directly on it was a modern repeating rifle. As my companion pointed out, the rifle

had lain there for some time, since it was already much rusted by the dew.

We stared at each other, marveling, then passed into the house without speaking. And even as we had expected, we found no living thing in the bungalow, nor any trace of a recent visit. Evidently the manager had followed the native workers in their flight.

Crouched on the ground outside, we discussed the matter in whispers. It was my idea that the inhabitants of the place had fled to the other end of the island, terrified by some strange manifestation from the volcano, such as the *Queensland* had seen. I suggested that we scout the other end of the island for them, and learn what we could from those we might find.

But Dr. Whitley was convinced that all of the people who had formerly resided here were dead. He pointed to the absence of any light or sign of life on the island, when we saw it from the plane, and recalled to my memory the fact that the radio of the island had not been heard for several weeks. And in the face of those facts, I could not but agree that any search would be useless.

Suddenly our whispering broke off sharply and we sat in silence, listening intently. And now the sound that had startled us came again, a thin humming, like the whine of some great machine. Scarcely audible, it seemed to have its source in the very air around us, yet we both turned and looked up behind us, where Rano Kao towered into the darkness.

Then, without warning, from the invisible summit of the volcano, a mighty bell sounded, a great, clanging note that seemed to roll down the slope and overwhelm us in a flood of deafening sound. Down the volcano's sides it rushed and over the island, and sounded out across the sea, God knows how far, then died into a whispering silence in which the memory of it still seemed to beat.

Crouched motionless on the ground, I gazed at Dr. Whitley, and my heart was clutched by a terrible fear. But not his! His face was afire with eagerness to know, everything else in his mind consumed in the flame of his scientific curiosity.

A moment of silence, and the great sound rolled out again, deafening, compelling, *cosmic,* like the chime of some vast clock that timed the movements of suns! And again it ebbed and died.

Came another silence of minutes, when a new sound smote our ears, low and deep, sustained a mournful, solemn intonation that was like the chanting of mighty hosts, swelling out into a vast dirge, as if all the choirs on Earth were voicing their wo. Human-voiced it was not, yet it was rhythmic, timed, unutterably awe-inspiring, sounding out across the dead island. And it swelled out until it reached its peak, then slowly died away.

Still we lay without moving, striving to pierce with our eyes the darkness that veiled the volcano's top, whence these sounds came. And as we waited tensely, a wonderful thing happened.

The clanging bell-note sounded once more, and at the same instant, it seemed, a huge shaft of brilliant crimson light shot into the air from the crater far above, soaring into the sky at a slight angle to an infinite distance. With involuntary cries we shielded our eyes with our hands, for the red light was blinding in its brilliance. As we lay with hands over our eyes, the chant swelled out again, but different now, stronger, deeper, *joyous!* And this time it did not die, but rolled forth in a triumphant, exultant flood.

Gazing between our fingers, we saw that the light was still shooting up,

and now we could see its size and awfulness. Fully a half-mile it was in thickness, springing out of the gigantic crater like some dreadful flower of scarlet flame. Pointing almost straight up into the sky, its end was not visible, for it simply seemed to fade into nothing far out in the void between the worlds.

I felt my arm gripped, and turned to Dr. Whitley. His face was alight with interest, and he spoke in low, excited tones. "See where it is pointing?" he asked, jerking his hand toward the heavens.

I looked again, then felt awe creeping over me, for the shaft of light seemed aimed directly at the tiny crimson disk that was Mars. As I stared, I heard his voice again, "You see the connection now?"

I did not answer, for I was stupefied. In silence we watched the column of light for perhaps three minutes, when the bell-note again rang out, and the light was simultaneously extinguished, leaving us in a deeper darkness than before. And the triumphant chanting fell slowly lower, then died away.

Minutes passed and there was no sound from the crater. Finally my companion rose to his feet, and I did likewise, stretching stiffly, after the uncomfortable position I had assumed while crouching on the ground.

"Let's go back to the plane," said Dr. Whitley. "There will be nothing more to see tonight, I am sure."

Silently, thoughtfully, we walked down to the shore. Each of us was brooding on what we had seen, and my thoughts were despairing enough. We had found the thing that was warping Mars out of its course, down to our destruction. But who—*what*—controlled it? And what was their object in doing such a thing, that meant death for them as well as us?

More important far, what could we do to stop it, to hurl the planet back? What? For how could two men hope to strive against beings who could reach out and halt a rushing world, who concentrated their power and their craft into a mighty ray with which they stabbed out at the very stars themselves—across space!

7

All through the next day we lay hidden by the shore, in a little cavern amid the rocks. To the eager questions of Lieutenant Rider we gave small answer, nor did we discuss the thing much between us. Dr. Whitley was speculating on it. I could see, and for my part I did not care to talk much about it. One suggestion, however, I did make, which was that we fly over the crater in the plane and bomb it, when the ray started. We carried enough high-explosive in the bomb-racks of the plane to almost destroy the crater itself, and I felt that it would not be hard to blow up whatever devilish machine was operating inside that volcano.

But Dr. Whitley refused altogether such a proposal. "What good would that do? he asked. "Would it stop Mars from falling toward us?"

I was silent, for it was evident that it would not. Yet what could we do? When I put that question to my friend, he said, "The only thing to do is to find out more about the thing in the crater, and then decide. At least we have found what is sucking down Mars, and we have several days yet before there will be danger to the Earth."

"You spoke of a suggestion Dr. Holland had made to you," I reminded him. "Did it have anything to do with this, by any chance?"

He was silent, reflecting. "Perhaps, perhaps," he answered absently; "though Holland was rather imaginative by nature. I will tell you later, though." And knowing how impossible it was to extract informa-

tion from him when he felt unwilling to talk, I said nothing more.

Night had come before we ventured forth from our hiding place, the swift tropical night, dropped on the island like a cloak and leaving us in complete darkness for a short time, then relieving that darkness by the light that rained down from the starry heavens.

Our plans for the night were already made. We two were to take up our position at the very edge of the crater, as soon as darkness had fallen, and were to wait until the action of the light began, as we were sure it would do, at midnight. After that we had no definite ideas, since what we might be able to do depended entirely on what we saw in the crater.

In the meantime, the pilot was to try to get a new supply of gasoline for the plane, from the stores in the village. There was quite a large amount kept on the island, so Whitley told us, used when the old brush and rubbish were burned away from the island's surface each year. If it was still intact, Lieutenant Rider should be able to transport enough of it down to the shore to have the plane refueled, and ready for emergencies.

So when night came, we two set out for the crater at once, leaving a penciled map with the pilot to guide his explorations. I do not think that we spoke much on our way to the crater. In fact, we were fully occupied with the task of getting to the volcano's top, since the slopes were extremely steep, and we were forced to proceed with the utmost silence and caution. Now and then we rested in the shadow of one of the great stone heads, a number of which were imbedded in the volcano's side.

It must have been well after 9 o'clock when we finally reached the very rim of the crater, and concealed ourselves under some low shrubs that grew at the chasm's edge. In the dim light we could make out almost nothing in the abyss below, save the steep, almost perpendicular sides, that sank down into the unfathomable darkness. There was no light in the crater, nor any movement that we could perceive. We could see nothing, I thought, until midnight came, and with it the crimson light.

So we lay there in silence, now and then whispering to each other, and the hours wheeled slowly by. My companion kept his eyes fastened on the crater, striving to pierce its shrouding darkness, but I soon tired of that, and watched Mars traveling across the sky, its evil eye of red coming closer and closer to a spot directly above our heads.

It was the size of an orange now, a tiny, bloody moon that must have struck terror into savages in far-off jungles who could not comprehend the cause of the phenomenon. I pictured to myself the scenes that must be in enactment in the world behind us, and the thought, curiously enough, steeled my resolution, for I knew that on us depended Earth's only chance.

I heard the click of Dr. Whitley's watch shutting, then his whisper, "Almost midnight," and I turned my attention to the depths below. For moments the same unbroken silence continued, then a sound broke from the pit below us, the same thin humming noise that had startled us on the night before. Simultaneously a light of bluish-white appeared on the crater's floor, a thousand feet beneath us, a deathly, ghastly illumination that resembled the light from a photographer's Cooper-Hewitts, yet nothing near so intense, being seemingly reflected, spread out.

And now we found that we had chosen a spot on the crater's edge where only a little of the bottom could be seen, since directly beneath us the side of the crater bulged out toward

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The Tower Ghost

by E. Phillips Oppenheim

"A tall, majestic figure, in flowing garb and long white beard, stood by the side of the tower, gazing out over the furious sea."

I HAVE written the title of this, my true story, and my eyes have wandered for a moment to the mirror which hangs almost directly in front of me. Strange that I should find myself smiling when but a short while ago I had sat down to my task so full of seriousness and deliberation. Yet so it is. I am smiling, and I can not help myself. Look with me into the mirror, and see whether you can not also find cause for mirth in the incongruity between my appearance and the mighty subject of ghosts. What can a somewhat portly, good-humored, and (my friends say) pleasant-looking woman of little over forty years of age, know about ghosts? There are no troubled lines in my face, no nerveless glitter in my eyes, or look of apprehension lurking about my countenance; I am altogether an unromantic-looking personage, devoid of superstition, lacking in imaginative power, and possessed of a very fair supply of common sense. And yet I alone amongst the living, can tell the true story of the ghost of Culbone Tower.

To do so I must go back to the days of my earliest childhood. I was born not many miles from Lynton, on the north coast of Devonshire, and I was an only child. Our home was a beautiful one—beautiful, indeed, seems a weak word. The house, perched on a narrow plateau of green turf, literally overhung the sea four hundred feet below, and above us a forest of pine trees stretched away precipitously to the head of the cliff. The only approach to it was by a steep winding path, dangerous after dark, and never safe for strangers, of whom, however, we saw none. The place is now a common resort of tourists; but in the days of my girlhood tourists were scarce, and if one did, by chance, present himself at the lodge gate, old Andrews knew better than to admit him. To have done so would have resulted in his instant dismissal.

From the sea our dwelling place must have seemed perfectly inacces-

sible, owing to the steepness of the cliff above, and the sheer descent. Many a time have I seen yachts brought in as near to the rock-strewn coast as the pilot would allow, that their owners or passengers might level their glasses with wonderment at our strangely situated abode. But I fancy that what most excited their wonderment was the curious little tower built on the summit of a huge boulder of bracken-covered rock, which seemed ever threatening to fall upon us and crush our frail tenement like a house of cards. Who built it, and wherefore, no one can tell. There were legends about it, of course, which, at a later period, were raked up and eagerly discussed by a terror-stricken community. But any authentic record as to its builder or its intended purpose was wanting. There it stood, like a Rhenish tower—massive, picturesque, of quaint foreign architecture, and, at the time when I best remember it, an object of ceaseless dread and terror to every member of our little household. Between it and the house yawned a cleftlike chasm, into the bottom of which, at high tide, the sea came curling. At one time, before my recollection, there had been a hand-bridge across; and my father would often go and smoke there, and even persuade such of his friends that were sure-footed and free from dizziness to accompany him. But that was many years before I reached girlhood, and I never thought of it, or heard it mentioned, save with bated breath and shuddering awe.

Well had it earned its evil reputation, for it had been the scene of the terrible tragedy which cast a deep gloom over my early life. My father had been one of three sons, who had lived with their widowed mother at a placed called Munster Castle, on the borders of Exmoor, some ten miles inland. Of these three sons my father, Frank Catherall, had been the eldest. Next to him came Francis, and the name of the youngest was Cecil. Like many other mothers, Mrs. Catherall leaned most to her youngest son, and failed altogether in concealing her preference. All three were strangely alike in disposition—stern, and reserved, with hot, fierce tempers, but generous withal, and passionately devoted to their mother. My father married first and came to live at Glencoombe, where I was born. My mother never got on very well with old Mrs. Catherall, but there was no actual unpleasantness, and I have faint recollections of some very early visits to Munster Castle. She, on her part, never returned these visits, but invariably excused herself on account of the peculiar situation of our house—an excuse against which we could urge nothing, for certainly the descent to it was by no means pleasant for anyone unaccustomed to the cliffs. Both my uncles were frequent visitors, however, and were welcomed warmly whenever they came. All three brothers seemed to be the closest of friends, and spent most of their time fishing, or shooting, or hunting together. They were popular in the neighborhood, and were generally supposed to be as they appeared—on the best of terms.

One November afternoon—how well I remember it!—they had all three gone out shooting over Dunkery Beacon. I was sitting at the window, wondering how long it would be before they returned, when suddenly the door opened, and my father entered the room. Directly I saw him I knew that something terrible had happened. His face, usually ruddy and sunburnt, was ghastly pale, and he tottered rather than walked into the room.

I was curled up on the floor reading, but I sprang up at once and ran over to him. I cried out to know what had happened.

"Don't ask me," he answered in a

fearfully hollow voice; "don't ask me." He took me in his arms and kissed me a great number of times, and when he put me down, he said "Good-bye."

I asked him where he was going, but before he could answer, my mother, who had heard him in the hall, came down to know why he had returned so soon, and alone. He answered her never a word, but simply kissed her as he had been doing me, until she got frightened and began to cling to him and cry. Then he turned his head away with a great sob, and rushed out of the room without another word.

I tried to follow, but he had locked the door. I heard him talking for a few minutes with Perkins outside, and then he hurried out of the house. My mother was ringing the bell violently; but though the servants came to the door at once they could not get us out, for my father had taken the key with him in his pocket.

While they were trying some other keys, I remembered the side window, and running to it, jumped out upon the lawn. What I saw made me sink dumb and helpless to the ground. The cry which I tried to force out froze upon my lips, and my limbs refused their office. On the other side of the chasm, standing on a part of the smooth boulder where I had often heard him say that he would not trust himself for a thousand pounds, was my father, holding in his hand the little hand-bridge by which he had crossed, and which he seemed to have caught up, to prevent Perkins from following him. While I watched him he flung the frail piece of carpentry down into the chasm, and from side to side I heard it rumble and bump until, with a sickening crash, it reached the bottom, and struck against the jagged edge of a rock, when in half a dozen rapid strides my father reached the other side of the boulder, and it flashed upon me that he meant to cast himself into the sea. For a moment he straightened himself, and I saw his powerful, massive form standing out as it were against the sky, when throwing his arms over his head with a wild despairing gesture, he crouched down for the spring. I fell on my face faint and trembling; when I looked up again, roused by a horrified shout from Perkins, he was gone.

After that I lost all consciousness, and for weeks I lay between life and death. When I slowly regained my senses, I found the one subject which I was burning, yet dreading, to hear about was denied me. No one would talk to me at all about my father. No one would tell me why he had done that fearful deed. To mention the tower before any of the servants was sufficient to send them trembling from the room. My mother would faint if I even tried to talk about my unhappy father, and Perkins strenuously refused to come near me for fear of being questioned.

As I grew stronger, I began to think it strange that neither of my uncles ever came to see us in our great sorrow. When I mentioned this to my mother, she was seized with a great trembling, and bade me never to mention them again. I had made up my mind, however, to be kept in ignorance no longer, and I was persistent. I would know everything. If they refused to tell me, I would run away to Castle Munster and find out from my grandmother, or from the servants there. I was so insistent that my mother at last gave way, and, leaning back in her chair amidst frequent storms of sobs and tears, she told me all that had happened.

I listened hungrily, standing back in a far corner of the solemnly darkened room, and with my eyes riveted upon the thick folds of crape which hung about my mother's frail form, I heard now that scarcely an hour after my father had cast himself from the

summit of Culbone Tower news came that my uncle Francis had been picked up from amongst the rocks below Bossington headland, dead, and with unmistakable marks of violence about his throat. An inquest was held upon the body, and an old shepherd, who had been ascending the hill from Allercombe, deposed, with great reluctance, that he had seen, far away from him, the figures of two men struggling together on the verge of the cliff, and that one had cast the other over. Then my Uncle Cecil had been called upon, and in a low tone he told his tale. They had all three been shooting together, he said, and were returning by the cliffs. There had been a slight unpleasantness between his two brothers during the early part of the day, and it suddenly blazed out again into a fierce quarrel as they stood on Bossington headland, prepared to descend into Porlock. He himself had been a little way behind at the time of the crisis, adjusting the strap of his gaiter, and just as he was straightening himself and preparing to move forward the calamity had occurred. He could tell them no more, he said; nor could he, for, strong man though he was, he suddenly reeled against the table and was carried from the room in a dead faint. There was a profound sensation amongst the little body of sympathizing men; but though the coroner pronounced the verdict in a broken voice and with tears in his eyes, it was the only one which they dared give, and it was:

"Wilful murder against Frank Catherall."

My first impulse, on hearing this awful story, was to disbelieve it. But then I remembered the fiery temper of all the Catheralls, which had led many of them in days gone by to commit deeds as rash, if not so sinful. And I thought of my father's wild appearance when he had burst in upon us, and of his mad climb up to Culbone Tower and its fearful sequel. Then, too, I remembered my Uncle Cecil's reluctant evidence, and my heart sank. The web of testimony was too closely woven. My father had died a murderer—had cast himself into eternity with the curse of Cain upon his head.

SLOWLY the months dragged by at our lonely home, and, as winter drew on, a fresh terror crept in upon us. In the middle of the night strange sounds often came from the dreary tower which loomed almost over our heads, and with the whistling of the November wind came cries and moans which seemed to us, listening in awe and trembling, like the outpourings of an anguished spirit. Others heard them besides ourselves, and strange tales reached us of a tall, majestic figure, in flowing garb and long white beard, which, whenever a storm was raging, could be seen standing by the side of the tower, gazing out over the furious sea. Such tales as these spread, and one by one our servants left us.

At first I was incredulous; but one afternoon at dusk, when the wild west wind was roaring down the coombs, and the sheets of rain were rolling over the cliffs in curling clouds, I crept on my hands and knees along our tiny strip of lawn, and, soaked through and through, and dreading every moment lest I should be blown over the cliffs, I crouched down with my eyes fixed upon the tower. Then I, too, saw it.

A chill, more icy than the driving rain or the cold earth could give, passed my shuddering frame as I saw suddenly emerge from the tower the tall figure which I had known and loved so well. With swift, even footsteps he seemed to pass without effort up the slippery, almost perpendicular rock, where I knew that no mortal footsteps could tread without slipping and falling backward amongst the

wet bespangled heather—there, in the same place that I had seen him pause between earth and sky, he stood still for a moment.

"Father!" I cried; "father!" But the rushing wind driving in my face refused to carry the sound and bore it back over my head. For a moment I closed my eyes, and when I opened them again the figure was gone. Then I knew that I had seen my dead father's spirit.

For a while I dared not look upon the scene of this terrible apparition, and when I told my mother what I had seen, she, too, was overwhelmed with fear, for she was by nature nervous, although I was not. One afternoon, however, not many weeks afterward, I summoned up my courage and walked almost to the edge of the chasm, gazing steadily up at the frowning tower above me. There was no sign of life there, mortal or ghostly, and gradually I felt my fears subside.

I was just turning away with a sigh of relief, when I heard the shuffle of footsteps, and found Perkins at my side. He looked at me narrowly, almost suspiciously, for a moment.

"What be't doing here, Miss Lizzie?" he asked, peering up at me from underneath his shaggy eyebrows. "Dost want to see t' poor master's ghost? You'll no see it in fine weather. He'll only come to us in a storm."

I shuddered.

"You have seen it, then?" I exclaimed eagerly. "Perkins, why does he come? It is awful!"

The old man turned round upon me, his voice in trembling anger.

"Why do 'e come, Miss Lizzie? Ay, you may well ask that. How do 'e think a poor spirit can rest in its dark watery grave when it's been so sorely wronged? I tell 'e this," he continued, hoarsely, holding his withered arm out toward the sea with a dramatic, almost majestic gesture, "never'll his spirit rest quiet, never'll the waves give up his body for decent burial, till Master Cecil Catherall take back his lying words, and the whole world knows as my poor dear master was no murderer. I tell 'e that, Miss Lizzie; I tell 'e that!"

He shuffled away, leaving me almost paralyzed by his strange words. Latterly we had come to look upon Perkins as weak in the head, and he spent all his time rambling about the place, no one knew where; but his words were spoken with such intense earnestness that they made a strange impression on me. All day long I was restless and uneasy, but in the morning I had come to a decision. I would go and see my Uncle Cecil.

The next morning, before anyone was astir, I started on my solitary expedition, leaving word only that I had gone for a long walk. Since the day of that terrible tragedy, we had had no message from either my grandmother or my uncle, and I felt not a little nervous at the idea of presenting myself before stern old Mrs. Catherall, who disliked my mother, and had never taken much notice of me. But for my age I had a wonderful amount of resolution, and I never shrank from my self-imposed task.

The road to Munster Castle lay across a great stretch of moorland, radiant with a purple glory and with gleaming yellow gorse in the summer, but barren and desolate-looking on that chill November morning. White clouds of mist came rolling down from the hills, at times soaking me through, and often I had to wade through the swollen streams which flowed across the rough track. Still I held on, though at times there came gusts of wind which carried me nearly off my feet, and though the path grew no better than the bed of a mountain torrent. At times a solitary sign-post standing out against the gray sky or the black hills cheered me on my way;

but not a human being did I meet till, after five hours of walking, the dreary towers of Munster Castle rose up before me. How my heart throbbed then!

I forgot how faint and weary I was as I entered the great courtyard and timidly rang the bell. No one answered the summons; so, as the door was open, I walked inside and sat down upon one of the carved oak chairs. Presently a tall, grave-looking servant came across the hall, and started back in amazement at the sight of me. I rose and explained my presence.

"You'll not be able to see Mr. Cecil, miss," he said, staring at me as if I were a wild creature. "He only came home from abroad yesterday; that is to say, he was brought home ill. I'll tell Mrs. Catherall, though, if you'll be pleased to take a seat. She's with him now."

He moved away, and opened a door on the opposite side of the hall. I watched my opportunity and followed him noiselessly through two great rooms into a smaller one, on the threshold of which he paused and said something to its inmates in a subdued tone. Before he had finished I had slipped past him and had entered the apartment.

In an invalid's chair, nearly smothered with magnificent furs, and drawn up before a blazing fire, lay my Uncle Cecil. His face was thin and haggard, and his great brown eyes seemed burning with a fierce but weary light. By his side stood my grandmother, majestic and handsome as ever, with her gray hair coiled in many plaits about her head, and an angry light gleaming in her still bright eyes.

"Child, how dared you come here?" she said in a low tone full of intense, vibrating anger. "Who are you?"

Before I could answer, my Uncle Cecil had sprung up from his couch with a quick, startled exclamation.

"My God!" he cried; "it is his child! It is Frank's child! What does she want?"

I moved toward him, quivering with excitement and striving to steady my voice.

"Uncle Cecil," I cried, "I have come to you because my father's ghost is crying out night and day from Culbone Tower, and Perkins says that it will never be quiet until you speak. I want to know all about the day when Uncle Francis was killed."

Such a cry as mortal lips seldom uttered burst from my grandmother's trembling lips. Uncle Cecil was shaking all over like a man stricken with a deadly ague. I gazed from one to the other; frightened, bewildered, yet not one whit disposed to withdraw my question.

"Child," she exclaimed in a tone tremulous with passion, "why have you come here with this mad story about your father's ghost? What can your uncle know about that miserable day that he has not already declared? Go home at once; or, stay, I will send someone home with you," and she stretched out her hand toward the bell.

He stopped her quietly, but firmly. There was a new look in his face which I liked little to look upon, although it gave me hope.

"Mother," he said calmly, "the time has come to speak. I will not die with this sin upon my conscience. Child! Lizzie! Your father was no murderer. It was I who threw Francis over the cliff."

I looked at him, and thought that I must be dreaming. With a great sob of agony my grandmother had thrown her arms around his neck, and was imploring him to be silent.

"He is raving," she said to me excitedly. "Take no notice of him: he is raving. Cecil, my darling, what

good can this do? Be silent; oh, be silent, for my sake!"

"Mother, I can not," he faltered. "God have mercy upon me, I can not! Lizzie, ring the bell!"

Mechanically I obeyed him. He asked a question of the servant who appeared, which was answered in the affirmative. A minute or two later a clergyman was shown into the room.

"Mr. Greyson," said my Uncle Cecil, stretching out his hand imploringly to where my grandmother kneeled on the floor beside him, "I want you to listen to a few words from me. I am going to tell you the truth about my brother Francis' death."

A deep groan from the prostrate figure by his side, and my uncle passed his hand across his forehead as if the task was almost beyond his strength.

"On that afternoon," he continued hoarsely, "Francis had spoken bitter but just words to me about a matter in which I was much to blame. While we waited on Bossington Hill for Frank, who was some distance behind, he recurred to the subject, and told me what steps he had decided to take in it. I called him an impertinent meddler, and struck him. We closed together, and in the struggle I threw my brother over the cliff. Frank came up just in time to witness the awful deed. For some minutes we could neither of us speak. Then, trembling with horror and fear, I stammered out a few wild words.

"'Cecil,' he cried, with his hands upon my shoulders, 'God help you! I am the only one who saw this. I will die sooner than give evidence against you, remember that. Get home, now, and say it was an accident.'

"He rushed away from me, and before I reached home I heard of his death. Then the shepherd came to me who had seen the struggle, and I was at my wits' end. Frank had died to save me. Should I let his sacrifice be in vain, or should I tell a lie which could hurt his memory only? I told the lie, and it has killed me; it has eaten the life away within me. I am a dying man, Mr. Greyson; and with the knowledge that in a day or two I shall stand before my God, I swear that this is the truth. I implore you to fetch a magistrate."

They took but little notice of me; and when Mr. Greyson left them, I slipped out, and, heedless of the wind and rain, started homeward. Across the bleak, desolate moor I sped, reveling in the wild blasts which swept down the mountain's side upon me, for I knew that the storm was increasing, and he would be there tonight.

I reached home; but, avoiding the house, I stepped out on the tiny strip of lawn, and, holding tightly on the iron railing, crept along toward the chasm. When I reached it, I could see nothing but the sea below, curling and hissing, sweeping in with a long hungry roar, and dashing its foaming spray far up the side of the cliff. Above me the fast-moving leaden clouds seemed descending almost within reach, and a hurricane was raging amongst the thickly-grown pine trees, whistling with a fierce mirth amongst their slender tops, shaking together with a harsh grating the cones, and bending them down like blades of grass. I crouched in a corner, waiting in awe till the fierce revelry of the elements should subside a little, and straining my eyes through the darkness to catch sight of the tower which loomed directly in front of me. Suddenly I heard a voice close to my side.

"Miss Lizzie, what in God's name are you doing here?"

I peered out into the darkness and recognized the dim outline of Perkins' bent form.

"Perkins," I cried, "I have been to

Castle Munster, and seen Uncle Cecil. It was he who killed his brother. He is dying; and he has confessed."

He seized me by the shoulders, with a strange light in his bleared eyes. "Be you lying? Tell me, quick!"

"It is true," I cried, frightened by his vehemence. "The ghost will trouble us no longer."

"The Lord be praised!" he muttered. "God! wha't that?"

Two young pine trees, torn up by their roots, were whirled across the lawn close to us, and, smashing through the iron palisading as if it had been rotten timber, disappeared over the edge of the cliff.

The old man fell on his knees, and prayed for a minute or two. Then he stood on to the remnant of the railing.

"I seen many a storm in my life," he muttered, "but ne'er such a one as this. God grant the tower may stand! Miss Lizzie, ye're a brave child. Dare 'e follow me?"

I nodded. The wind would have mocked at my efforts at speech had I attempted it.

"Come, then!" He moved slowly forward to the very verge of the chasm, dragging something behind him. I followed on hands and knees.

He paused and threw a rough plank across to the boulder on which the tower stood. He stepped carefully across, and presently I heard his voice from the other side.

"I ha' made it fast, Miss Lizzie. Dare 'e come?"

I crept to the edge and looked down with a shudder at the black yawning chasm.

"Shall I see the ghost, Perkins?" I cried.

"Ay, ay," he answered. "See!" And he half roused himself from the bracken among which he had been crouching, and pointed with a long trembling finger toward the tower. To my amazement there was a feeble light burning in the topmost chamber.

"I will come, Perkins," I cried. "Wait for me."

I knelt down, clinging to a shrub until there was a momentary lull in the gusts which came tearing and roaring down the coomb. Then I sprang up, and, holding my breath, hurried across the frail little bridge. The moment I was in safety we commenced the ascent to the tower, but we had got little more than half-way up when another burst of wind and rain came around the corner of the coomb, and we had to sink down amongst the wet bracken and dig our fingers into the very earth to save ourselves from being carried away and swept over the edge of the cliff. There we lay, cowed and shuddering, for what seemed to me an interminable while, listening to the wild melancholy shrieking of the wind amongst the pine trees, and the loud angry roaring of the furious sea below. At last it seemed to abate a little, and almost on our hands and knees we crept up to the door of the tower. My heart was beating with a fierce excitement, increased by all that I had gone through during that wonderful day, and I seemed to have a distinct consciousness that something extraordinary was going to happen.

Perkins pushed open the door with his foot, and we tumbled together into the narrow chamber. A tall figure sprang from the other end of the place toward us, and at first I shrank away in an agony of fear; but then I heard my name in well-remembered accents, and saw a familiar pair of arms stretched out toward me, and my fear died away. "Father," I cried, "father!" and with one bound I threw myself into the passionate embrace of the ghost of Culbone Tower.

THAT same night, after my tale had been told, my father abandoned his self-imposed exile, and returned

with me to Glencoombe. On the morrow news reached us of my Uncle Cecil's death; but his confession had been signed and witnessed, and my father found himself a hero.

For a while we continued to live at Glencoombe. But so constant was the stream of visitors who came to gaze upon the haunted tower, and over the edge of the rock on to the shelflike plateau which had served as a hiding place, that to escape them we moved to Munster Castle, which, since the death of Mrs. Catherall—she had not long survived her favorite son—had become my father's property. And there I lived until my name was no longer Catherall, and someone took me away to another part of the country.

The Lizard's Bite Was Certain Death, As Le Ristaut Learned to His Sorrow

A Creeping, Crawling Thing

By DICK HEINE

MONSIEUR BRÉCOUX arrived in Paris on the fast evening train from Lyons. He was a man of middle height, wearing a stylish, light-brown overcoat, a black derby hat, and a gray traveling suit. His thin face was tanned, and he had a small brownish mustache. His only baggage was a small handbag, which contained nothing but four objects: a small, live lizard about four inches long, a spool of white silk thread, a silver teaspoon, and a tiny bottle of black liquid.

Monsieur Brécoux took a taxicab from the station, directing the driver to an address in the Rue des Pyrénées. As he sat back comfortably, the handbag at his feet, there was an expression of complete satisfaction in the clear, blue eyes under the high, wide forehead and a look of pleasant anticipation on his rather inscrutable features. Nobody in all the world could have guessed what Brécoux was up to now; perhaps several gentlemen in blue clothes would have been interested had they known. But there was one man in Paris expecting him—Pierre Le Ristaut.

After half an hour's driving, the taxicab stopped before the house in the Rue des Pyrénées. Soon Monsieur Brécoux was seated in a brilliantly-lighted and elegantly-furnished room engaged in conversation with the man he had come to visit.

The two faced each other across a fine polished table, in the middle of which rested the handbag. Pierre Le Ristaut was about fifty, tall, thin, and aristocratic-looking. His well-kept black clothes, his handsome features, his attentive manner would have deceived anyone who did not know that he was a criminal of the first order. To the world, he was a gentleman of means; in reality, he

was a man of decidedly questionable ways.

"I must ask you to explain just exactly what you want," Brécoux was saying.

"It is simple enough," said the suave and polite Le Ristaut. "I want to get a certain paper from the hands of the Marquis d'Onan. The marquis carries this paper in a belt around his waist. He is never without the belt. But he is a cautious man; moreover, he must not know that I am after the paper at this particular time. The people for whom I am operating do not want him to become over-suspicious. I was informed that you have a method of—er, you might say removal of personal factor, that never fails. If you can guarantee to get this paper for me, I am prepared to pay you the price mentioned in my letter. Can you do it?"

"I am afraid not, without the removal of the personal factor," said Brécoux. "Fortunately, I came ready to do that. But I must know some more about this d'Onan. Where does he live?"

"At the Louis Court, Boulevard Arago. His house is surrounded by large grounds. The bedroom is known to me. You can gain access to that easily enough by climbing up the vines on the side of the house and reaching the balcony and his windows."

"And will you accompany me to the house and enter the bedroom?"

"I will—but tell me your method."

"It is quite simple. I have here in this handbag a certain lizard, a rare form of the *lacertilia*, and non-poisonous. I can make it poisonous for a definite length of time. It then bites once, and the effect is invariably fatal. But the subject must be alive; it never bites a dead person."

"How do you protect yourself?"

"I have learned how to handle him —I say 'him' now, for I call the lizard Oscar. I never operate with Oscar. He does his little work entirely by himself. I tie a thread around the middle of the body and let him go where he pleases. Then I retrieve by means of the thread."

"The bite—how is it made poisonous?"

"I give him a few drops of a mixture of arsenic, aconite and digitalis in a base of a solution of cyanic acid. The formula was accidentally discovered by an Italian physician experimenting with the reptilian heart. He himself was bitten by a harmless lizard and nearly died of blood-poisoning. The combination must set up some sort of reaction in the system; it makes Oscar at once vicious, aggressive and venomous. He has learned to love his medicine."

"So far, I see the road clear. But how long will this induced state last?"

"About two hours. I generally load Oscar at home. Two hours suffice in most cases for my little expeditions."

"Will you consent to operate tonight? It is only 10 o'clock. We can leave about 1 in my machine and be back by 3 in the morning."

"I will gladly go tonight. Do you want to see Oscar?"

Brécoux opened the handbag, thrust in his hand, and took out the lizard. The creature crawled sluggishly over the polished table. He was full of a dull green color, with a suggestion of scaliness; his tail was sharp and repulsive; the bulging eyes, covered with winking lids, roamed furtively over the men. The jaws were long, the legs bold and clumsy; the under-belly gasped and pulsated with the breathing and circulation. Le Ristaut shuddered at the deviltry of Brécoux.

Shortly before 1 o'clock, Brécoux prepared to fix Oscar for his night's work. He took out of the handbag the liquid, teaspoon, and white silk thread. The lizard crawled expect-

antly up before his master, seeming to know that his craved potion was about to be administered. Brécoux poured a few drops of the black liquid into the spoon. The reptile opened his jaws wide and raised his head. The stuff was poured easily into the throat. This done, Brécoux hurriedly tied the thread around the body between the sets of legs. Then he placed his lizard and spoon and bottle back in the bag, letting the thread come out through a little slot on the fastenings and holding the spool in his hand.

"All I have to do now," he explained, "is to carry the spool and the handbag's handle in the same hand. When I wish Oscar to operate, I merely open the case, pull him out, and pay off the thread from the spool."

LE RISTAUT'S fine automobile whirred across Paris. The Pont de Bercy was crossed, and the machine went down the Boulevard de la Gare and over into the Boulevard Arago. Finally, a great estate with extensive front grounds loomed up to the left. When the car stopped two blocks beyond the driveway, Le Ristaut instructed his chauffeur to wait, and the men got out.

They were soon climbing over a low wall and walking toward the big house. The grassy lawn was thick with trees. Le Ristaut seemed to know his way perfectly. He led Brécoux into a curving walk that went toward the rear of the grounds. Presently, they turned and went to the side of the house. By the light of the moon, they saw a vine-covered wall that rose twenty feet to a small balcony, above which gleamed the reflecting panes of large windows.

"The bedroom is behind those windows," whispered Le Ristaut. "I have climbed to the balcony before, and it can be done without much noise. I'll go first. Then I can assist you."

But a minute sufficed for him to reach the balcony. Brécoux followed easily enough, giving his hand to his companion, who pulled him safely up. They stood still for several minutes to make certain they had not been heard. The room appeared dark within. Le Ristaut softly tried one of the glass window-doors. It moved easily. He turned his flashlight into the room. A bar of light showed the bed, in which was the form of a sleeping man lying on his side. The dark hair and black mustache were plainly visible.

"He is a sound sleeper," said Le Ristaut softly into Brécoux's ear. "I have heard he rarely wakes before 9 in the morning. I'll keep the light on until Oscar is released and reaches the bed."

They stepped inside, and Brécoux opened his handbag and took out the lizard. The moonlight, streaming in through the window, reflected from the greenish skin, and the reptile assumed a strange glow as he wriggled in his master's hand.

When placed upon the floor, Oscar hesitated not a second, but began to crawl swiftly across the floor toward the bed. The flashlight followed him. The bed was reached, and the lizard caught the covering near the floor with his jaws and pulled his clumsy legs up to grasp the cloth. When Brécoux saw that Oscar was mounting successfully, he had Le Ristaut shut off the light. Then he stood silently in the darkness. Only the trembling thread in his hand and the turning of the spool indicated the progress of the destroying reptile.

About fifteen minutes passed. Le Ristaut's breathing became audible with suspense and excitement.

"Let us retrieve and see what has been done," he suggested to Brécoux.

"No, let's don't pull Oscar out yet. Doubtless, he has done his work, and

the marquis has been several minutes dead, but we must make sure. Show your light."

The light flashed. On the white mound of the man's body the lizard stood at rest, sending out and pulling in his little tongue with rapid movements.

"I think we can go to the bed now," said Monsieur Brécoux. "Perhaps we can pull down the shades and turn on the lights."

Le Ristaut closed the window-doors behind them, drew the shades, and felt for the switch. After a minute he flashed on the electric lights. The room was elegant. High walls and ceiling were wonderfully finished in cream-white; the floor was carpeted with soft plush; the furniture shone with a fine mahogany finish; and the bed was a marvel of beauty. Under the gorgeous coverings the form of the Marquis d'Onan lay still.

Brécoux carefully pulled off his lizard. Oscar suffered himself to be hauled in and returned to the handbag. Brécoux stood then with the rewound thread and the bag's handle in the same hand.

"It seems that all is well so far," said Le Ristaut. "Let us examine the body."

The man's back was toward them, one shoulder mounting high under the coverings. He was handsome, with a fine head of hair and distinguished mustache and healthy, pink skin. Le Ristaut touched the cheek. He drew his hand away quickly, as if shocked by the marble coldness. A look of perplexity spread over his face. Brécoux boldly stripped off the bedclothes.

The Marquis d'Onan was made of wax. His face, perfectly reproduced, had momentarily fooled Le Ristaut. But now all was clear. The figure was clad in silk pajamas, and looked very natural.

"The devil!" whispered Le Ristaut. "Now we're in for it! Let us replace the bedclothes and retreat at once, leaving everything just as we found it. I might have known the marquis would have made some arrangements to protect his slumber. I'll bet now that he doesn't sleep in this house at all."

"And Oscar has not yet bitten anyone," said Brécoux. "He still holds the venom in his stomach."

They arranged the bed and wax figure as it had been before, and went softly to the window. Brécoux turned off the lights and let up the shade. When he tried to open the window, it refused to move. Le Ristaut also tried vainly to open it. But try as they might, they could not move the doors. Somehow the catches had become tight, and nothing could release them. Brécoux walked in the darkness to a door that apparently was a hall-door. It was locked.

By the window the men stood, caught in the room with no way of escaping. To break open the glass window-doors would be certain to bring discovery; to force the door would let the whole household down on them. There was at the present no evident way of getting out.

Suddenly Le Ristaut's eye caught a yellow streak on the floor against the wall. He turned his flashlight on it. A door showed, and he knew that a light was on in the next room. Both men stepped over to the door and listened. All was silent. For twenty minutes they strained their ears in the darkness without hearing anything. The keyhole showed nothing but a bare, white wall opposite the eye.

Finally, it occurred to Brécoux to do something desperate.

"I know a way," he said to Le Ristaut.

"What is it?"

"You know Oscar has not yet bitten, and still holds his poison. Evidently someone is asleep in that room with the light on. I think I can let

Oscar into the room through the crack where the light shows. The door stands high enough from the floor. Oscar will kill the person, and we can then cut the lock out of the door and see if we can find a way of escape through the windows in there."

"Good!" said Le Ristaut. "It is our only chance to get out tonight."

Brécoux opened up the handbag in the gleam of the flashlight and took out his lizard. He handled the reptile carefully and put him on the floor by the yellow bar. The creature was restless and showed pleasure when he saw the light. He raced toward it, spinning the spool in Brécoux's hand, crawled quickly under the door, and was gone.

The thread went out rapidly. Three minutes passed, and it still trembled and came off the spool. However, it soon became lax and moved no more.

For half an hour the men stood in the darkness, breathlessly waiting for something to take place — they could not be sure what. Finally, Brécoux pulled in the thread. It came easily, and at the end there was no lizard.

"Oscar must have broken his thread," said Brécoux. "I think we had best proceed with cutting out the lock now. All must be over in the room."

All was over in the next room, but just beginning in this one; for just as Le Ristaut was feeling for his pocket-knife, a lock clicked in the darkness. Both men turned, and perceived, by the beam of the flashlight, that the door to the hall was opening rapidly. A white hand felt along the wall, and a switch was pressed. A flood of light swept into the room. The men, for a moment blinded, were dumfounded by what they saw.

A woman had entered from the hall and closed the door behind her. She was middle-aged and beautiful. Her body, clad in night-dress, was also wrapped in a purple dressing gown belted with a jeweled girdle. Her left hand was held straight out from her shoulder, and from a three-foot thread wound about her fingers Oscar dangled, wriggling frantically. Her right hand held a silver-finished automatic pistol, which was pointed at the breasts of Brécoux and Le Ristaut.

The two surprized men lost no time in raising their hands above their heads, Brécoux dropping his spool of thread and handbag upon the floor. The spool rolled under a table. There the trio stood for a minute before anyone spoke. Brécoux's black derby and brown overcoat looked strangely out of place; the elegant Le Ristaut, with handsome face and neater clothes, harmonized more closely with the luxury of the room and the woman outlined in purple against the cream-white door.

"Marie Frizel!" gasped Le Ristaut at last.

"Pierre Le Ristaut!" said the woman in a clear, rich voice. "I am no longer Marie Frizel of 'The Winding Stairs.' That I may have been, but I am now the Marquise d'Onan. I need not ask you what you are doing in my house. I was reading in bed when this reptile came to do its work. Do you take me for a fool? A green lizard with a string to it climbing up a bed in the dead of night can mean only one thing—an attempt to murder someone. But, thanks to heaven, I saw it in time. Also, let me be thankful that my husband is away, that he protects himself with a false bedroom, a wax likeness, and automatic locking devices on the windows. Without his foresight, I should not now have the good fortune to see you a prisoner in my hands. Well, you shall pay! Who is this man with you?"

"That is no business of yours," said Le Ristaut, already white with fear and the recollection of past things perhaps unspeakable.

The woman looked directly at Brécoux.

"I do not know you, nor anything about you. Whatever you may have done or were preparing to do was but at the instigation of this fiend who is about to die. But you are a burglar in my house, and as such you must be arrested. Jean!"

The door opened, and a heavy-set young serving man appeared.

"Take this man and deliver him to the nearest police officers. Tell them that he was caught prowling in my house and that I shall see the local *commissaire* tomorrow. Return here afterward!"

The servant walked in, caught Brécoux in an unbreakable grip and dragged him helpless from the room, closing the door behind him. The Marquise d'Onan faced Le Ristaut with triumph on her pretty features, satisfaction in her rich dark eyes of flame.

"Surely you do not intend to kill me," stammered Le Ristaut.

"Why should you not die? Have I not a thousand just reasons for sending you to hell?"

"But listen. My machine and chauffeur are only two blocks away. Allow me to go home—I will pay you money, I will leave France."

"Thanks for the information. I am going to Deauville, and shall need an extra limousine for my servants. As for your chauffeur, he'll be none the worse when he awakes on the other side of Paris with a lump on his head. No, Pierre Le Ristaut, I can not afford to let you go. Jean will be back in a few minutes."

Jean returned.

"Take this one and tie him hand and foot," said the Marquise d'Onan.

Jean obeyed his orders swiftly and expertly, and Le Ristaut was shortly lying on his back on the floor. The woman tied one end of the thread to a paper weight and anchored Oscar on the rug with enough slack thread for him to reach Le Ristaut. Then she and Jean left the room.

When they came in twenty minutes later, Oscar was sleeping soundly on Le Ristaut's lifeless cheek. Jean smashed the lizard's head with a paper-weight and put him and the spool of thread in the handbag.

"By the way, Jean, throw that handbag *also* into the river," said the Marquise d'Onan as she turned and left the room.

Monsieur Brécoux, temporarily detained in Paris on a little charge of burglary, speculates as to what sort of paper the Marquis d'Onan carries in a belt around his waist, and he thinks very tenderly of his poor, dear little Oscar, and wonders whatever became of him.

THE SURGEON of SOULS

by Victor Rousseau

The Case of the Jailer's Daughter

"The girl struggled no longer, but sat watching, apathetical and hopeless."

ALTHOUGH our intimacy did not arise until some time afterward, my first meeting with Dr. Brodsky profoundly impressed me. He was at that time professor of nervous diseases at the hospital to which I had been newly attached—a dark, sinewy, undersized man, with a great head absurdly disproportionate to his body, and flashing eyes that seemed to pierce through you and read your thoughts as he looked at you, though without his glasses he could scarcely have seen his hand in front of his face. Ivan Brodsky, he called himself, and it was said that he was a cross between two races whose blend of shrewdness and mysticism was probably accountable for the production of so remarkable a personality as his own.

Brodsky was at once the most unassuming and the most audacious of men. Unassuming in that he took no part in the little social festivities and celebrations of the country town. Outside the confines of the hospital, where he was all-dominating, he might have been a small storekeeper for all the pose he adopted. It was said that he spent his entire spare time reading and studying—and making his remarkable investigations.

Yet he was the most audacious of men by reason of the experiments which he performed in the ward set apart for the treatment of obscure brain lesions. Uncanny experiments he would perform there, some of which curdled the blood in the veins of us younger men. He was an expert hypnotist and received delicate cases from all parts of the country: lost and multiple personality, amne-

sia, agraphia, aboulia, all the odds and ends of neuroses that had been given up in despair by the "regulars." There for weeks—for months, sometimes—he would devote himself incessantly to the unfolding of some labyrinthine twist in the brain, piecing together lost fragments of the soul by constant hypnosis, until he had straightened out the complications and restored a clean human being to the world. And when he had at last brought back health and sanity, perhaps after half a year of wallowing in the slough of madness, he would turn to us with his whimsical smile.

"Is there any among you gentlemen who still denies the existence of a personal, immortal soul?" he would ask, expecting the instantaneous negative that would spring from our lips.

Perhaps some student, younger or bolder than the rest, would acknowledge the impeachment.

"You are half right," Brodsky would rejoin, with that curious touch of the unexpected which was always characteristic of him. "Not in that you deny the soul. There is soul everywhere; it contains the body as the amber holds the fly. But you are half right when you deny that the soul is personal, for we have one common fund to draw upon, and there is not much more difference between one individual and another than between two flowers on the same shrubs. The body is the merest external; it is the soul which occupies it, moving from house to house."

Few of us could follow the doctor when he became metaphysical. Some of us inferred that he was alluding to those peculiar cases of multiple personality that we sometimes investigated, in which two or more separate and distinct individuals seemed to be struggling for control of a single body. Others believed that he referred to the doctrine of reincarnation, in which he was said to be a believer.

The beginning of my real intimacy with Brodsky was that day in which he selected me to assist him in the examination of the brain of Radovitch, the murderer. Radovitch was a huge Slav miner, a man of enormous strength and stature, and the intelligence of a child. He was brutalized as few even among his kind are. During the entire period of his thirty-odd years of life no single redeeming influence had ever come to him. To work for twelve hours each day, stripped to the waist, begrimed with coal dust, in the mines, to go home to sleep like an animal or to consume potations of brandy until he lay stretched out upon some pot-house floor insensible—such was the routine of his life, varied only by occasionally beating his wife and smashing the wretched furniture in their squalid home upon the outskirts of the town. During the course of one prolonged debauch he murdered the woman amid circumstances of atrocious cruelty; he then set fire to the house, which was insured for a small sum, by means of a clumsy contrivance of oil-soaked cotton waste and gunpowder, and calmly presented himself at the offices of the insurance company the next day in order to draw the money. His trial and conviction were the merest formality—the jury did not even leave the box—and he was duly sentenced to die in the electric chair.

I had visited the adjoining death cell to treat an Italian murderer for defective hearing (the proneness of a man under sentence of death to worry about some minor ailment is an interesting and frequent psychological phenomenon, akin, I suppose, to that which induces him, upon the very morning of his execution, to partake of a hearty breakfast) when the head jailer pointed out Radovitch to me. The giant Slav's appearance

was one of incredible bestiality. The narrow head was no larger than a child's, his little piglike eyes were narrowed with fear and cunning and he presented that extreme symmetry of feature which, as Nordau was the first to point out, is constantly associated with the criminal type. I was gazing at him in horror, yet unable to tear myself away, when I heard Brodsky's voice speaking behind me.

"It is a striking commentary upon our so-called civilization that we put such a creature as that to death," he said. "One might more justly slaughter a gorilla."

"It is cruel," I answered. "But, Dr. Brodsky, is not such a creature, after all, better off out of the world than in it? A moment's suffering—and he has ceased to exist."

That was the first time that I ever saw Brodsky lose his self-control.

"Is it possible," he cried, "that you consider that death will really wipe out that individuality?"

"Well, doctor," I said, with some hesitation, "I don't pretend to know what's going to happen to the immortal part of him, assuming that there is any immortal part to survive. But at least he will be removed from our human world, as we know it."

The doctor gave a short laugh and tapped me on the shoulder.

"My boy," he said impressively, "he will not be removed at all, because, since he has presumably never experienced any spiritual yearnings, he will continue to haunt this only world that he knows, but in a discarnate form. The death of Brodsky will set free a certain conglomerate mass of soul-stuff, uncertain of its destiny, humbly anxious to learn, but at any rate not desirous of remaining in contact with a world which it has thoroughly experienced and come to be weary of. But the death of Radovitch will set at liberty a vast, chaotic lump of animal soul, actuated by the same vicious and untrained desires that controlled it during the life of the body, yet freed from the dynamic laws of its mortal prison and"—I had never seen him appear more earnest—"seeking to incarnate itself in some other body which will grant it the gratification of its earthly desires. The death of Radovitch will be the release of just so much additional force of evil."

He turned away and then the jailer came to usher us out of the prison. It was then that Dr. Brodsky asked me to assist him at the autopsy, to which I eagerly agreed.

During those last days of the murderer's life he somehow became acquainted with the jailer's little daughter, a child of eight or nine years. It should never have been allowed, but jail discipline is notoriously lax in country towns; the child had been in the habit of helping her father carry the prisoners their food, and had somehow wandered into that part of the jail which was set apart for the condemned, of course not knowing what these men's fate was to be. The acquaintance proved mutually attractive. The savage Slav took a curious fancy to the child. The jailer, a devout Catholic, was at first horrified, but finally assented to the prolongation of this curious friendship, moved partly by the child's entreaties, and hoping, also, that the softening influence of the little girl might bring Radovitch to a realization of his impending fate and induce him to accept the consolations of religion, which he had rejected. Radovitch had seemed to possess no more idea of the meaning of death than any animal; during those last days, however, some inkling of the doom approaching seemed to awaken him to a sense of his spiritual needs. He was persuaded to accept the ministrations of a priest, and ultimately died in the full peace of the church, his little friend believing he had passed out of prison to the free world beyond.

I PASS over the horror of the electrocution, which I witnessed. Radovitch did not seem wholly to understand why they strapped his arms, nor why they seated him in the chair. One instant he looked round him in stupid amazement—the next an indelible aspect of terror and amazement convulsed his features, as though he realized that life was to be snatched from him by stealth. The death mask was adjusted, the warden dropped his handkerchief, the body strained against the straps, and in an instant the life had gone.

The examination was performed, the body was laid to rest. I dismissed all thought of Radovitch from my mind as well as I was able. At that time Brodsky, who seemed to have taken a liking to me, had asked me to assist him in some delicate laboratory work, which threw us continually together.

About five days after the electrocution, when we had been working late and were about to leave his private laboratory in the hospital, the emergency bell was jerked rapidly and violently and a man came hurrying in. I recognized him at once as the jailer. He stumbled up to Brodsky, mumbling some unintelligible words. The doctor took him by the shoulders.

"Gently," he said, leading him to a chair. "Take your time."

"You—told—me to come to you—if I was in trouble," the man panted. "Then I did not know—what you meant. Now I know. My little girl—she——"

"Yes," said Brodsky, soothingly, slipping a syringeful of morphine into his coat pocket. "I will come with you immediately. Do you care to see a curious case of what I should be compelled officially to term 'alternating personality,' though it is nothing of the kind?" he continued, turning to me.

I assented eagerly to the invitation, and soon we three were traversing the deserted streets, the little doctor with difficulty keeping pace with the jailer's hasty strides. After five or ten minutes we arrived at his house, which flanked the jail. The jailer's wife, weeping and much agitated, opened the door to us.

"He knows," her husband whispered with awe, fearfully indicating Brodsky. And then for the first time it flashed across my mind that these people must doubtless be well acquainted with the doctor, had, perhaps, come to rely upon him through many experiences. One could see that they trusted him implicitly from the manner in which they hung upon his lightest word and gesture.

"When did all this begin?" he inquired, more to elicit particulars, as it seemed to me, than from any desire for knowledge of the main facts.

"Until this morning she never spoke," muttered the jailer, crossing himself. "Then he—he—he—he—he——" The man's teeth were chattering as though he were ague-stricken.

"Quite so," said Brodsky, pleasantly, turning to me. "He was naturally dazed and dumb and stupid, and not feeling at all himself when he awoke from an unusual experience. Then he found his tongue. Almost anybody might be struck dumb after several thousand volts had been sent coursing through his body, which was furthermore dissected and then buried away in quicklime."

"Do you mean to say," I gasped, "that Radovitch——?"

"That our friend Radovitch has come to life again?" said Brodsky. "That he has come back without his overcoat? Quite probably—I have known such cases—although this may be merely a subjective condition induced through auto-suggestion caused from brooding over his departure. However, that would be far more improbable. Yes, my friend, I think

our dead friend, who, by the way, was never more than half dead at best, is waking up in somebody else's house."

"Nothing is any use," the jailer gasped. "We sprinkled holy water over her, and the priest pronounced the exorcism, but it was no use at all."

"Of course not," said the doctor. "Don't blame the priest for that, though. All truth is relative in that world that Radovitch is now an inhabitant of. Had he ever had it knocked into his hard head that the devil flies from holy water, no doubt a single drop would have sent him howling into limbo, but as he dosen't know what it means you can hardly consider him impolite to stay. But take us to the patient."

At the same instant the crash of breaking furniture resounded through the house, intermingled with strange, guttural interjections. The jailer led the way hastily to a room at the end of a long corridor, the doctor and I followed him. Upon the floor, partly freed from the ropes with which she had been bound, was the child, struggling to release herself from the chair she had overturned, whose broken pieces seemed to have been subjected to the physical strength of a powerful athlete. Her face was distorted with rage, and low, unintelligible sounds came from her lips. Though violently inclined, she seemed restrained by some lethargy from active violence, and she glanced around at us, not recognizing anyone. As the doctor and her father caught her to readjust the bonds, she struck at them viciously. It needed our united strength to hold her, while the doctor injected a few doses of morphine into her arm.

But what will haunt me to the last day of my life was the girl's face. No longer that of a young child, it presented rather the aspect of a man's—a man who had spent years in evil living and thinking. The glazed eyes, the puffy skin, bespoke a life of debauchery; while over the coarsened features were stamped the imprints of the most devilish passions that ever ruled over the flesh. And in an instant I perceived, ridiculously implanted upon the little face, the stamp of the Russian murderer.

"When did this begin?" asked Brodsky, holding the girl tightly and with amazing strength.

"The day after his death," the jailer answered. "She could not be awakened easily the next morning. She seemed stupid and sleepy and complained of evil dreams. Then she tried to get into the cell which he had occupied, and when we prevented her she became sullen and angry. She did not seem to recognize us at all, and she began to mutter in an outlandish speech that none of us could understand. Then she would fall asleep for a moment and wake up, herself again. She kept sleeping and waking, and each time she was different."

"Yes," murmured Brodsky to me in an aside. "Her own personality was fighting that of the invader, with varying success. And as he grew stronger he came to usurp his place more easily. Go on."

"I knew who it was," the jailer whispered, trembling. "One who has had charge of a prison sees—sees so many things after an execution. Things that one never dares to make public, for fear of being called insane. All jailers know of them. My wife knew—she sent for the priest. He knew, too. He tried the exorcism, but to no purpose."

"Nevertheless, a wise attempt," said Brodsky to me. "Nothing that makes for good, as all religion does, can cause evil."

"The last time she awoke she was wholly insane," continued the jailer. "She didn't recognize either me or her mother. She muttered all the time in a strange tongue. Sometimes

there was an English word, but we couldn't make out the drift of it. And the agony of her struggles—and her dumb—she was not our child——"

He broke down and hid his face in his hands. Meanwhile the morphine had begun to take effect; the girl struggled no longer, but sat watching us, apathetical and hopeless. The vicious stamp had gone from the face, leaving the brutish, melancholy Slav.

"Yes, you can picture the father's suffering," said the doctor. "The murderer awakes—he wants to come back. He is lonely and cold; he sees a home, family life, things which awaken a dumb longing within his stunted soul. And so this little girl's body is made the scene of this tremendous drama. It is this struggle of the disembodied to express themselves in terms of the flesh that is the cause of almost all our mental diseases."

Dr. Brodsky wheeled over toward the child suddenly. From his pocket he took a burnished mirror of bronze, hardly larger than a quarter-dollar. "Look at this!" he commanded.

The child turned her eyes upon it silently.

"Look!" Brodsky repeated, and with his finger he gave the mirror a twist that set it spinning upon a tiny wire which produced a rapid, circulatory movement. It spun like a thread of light. The child's eyes became immovable. Dr. Brodsky leaned forward and placed a finger upon each eyelid, closing them. The girl sat bolt upright, but perfectly motionless. I had seen this procedure often in the mental ward; it was the hynotic sleep that Brodsky had induced.

I knew that he had put the dominant personality to sleep in order to call up whatever lay beneath that external stratum of consciousness.

"You are asleep," said Brodsky, softly. "You will sleep more deeply. Now you are gone. You are quite gone. Now speak. Open your eyes. You—Radovitch!"

As a ripple passes over the face of a still pool, changing its entire aspect, so the light came back to the expressionless features. Once again it was Radovitch; but all the cunning, the hate, the vileness had been purged away. It was the soul of Radovitch, stripped of the emotions, the passions that had defiled it.

"Who art thou?" asked Brodsky, gently, using the familiar Russian termination.

The eyes opened wider in fear; the lips trembled.

"Thou art with friends," said the doctor, compassionately. "Have no fear. So—thou art Radovitch?"

"Yes, I am Radovitch," said the lips, mechanically.

"Why didst thou come here?" continued the doctor.

"Ah, don't drive me away," pleaded the man's voice from the child's body. "It is all dark outside. There is nobody—nobody. It is all dark and cold. Here it is warm. And she was my friend."

"What did they do to thee, to bring thee to this extremity?" asked Brodsky, while the jailer and I, awed into silence, could only sit, staring and listening. "What did they do to thee?"

"I do not know."

"Dost thou not know that thou art dead?"

A spasm of terror convulsed the lips and the cheek muscles. "Dead?" cried the voice. "No; for then I should be in hell."

"You are in all the hell that you are likely to get, my friend," muttered the doctor. "What dost thou remember?"

"I remember—I remember—they told me I was to die," the voice muttered, ramblingly. "They bound my arms tightly so that they pained me, and they placed me in a strange

chair. Then—I do not know what they did to me, for I fainted. But when I awoke everyone was gone and it was all cold and dark. So, finding myself free, I thought: 'Radovitch, thou hast broken free from the jail. Some brandy will cure thee, and thou hast credit at the saloon.' Then, instantly, I found myself in the saloon, but none heeded me when I called, nor seemed to see me. So I thought: 'Either thou art escaped and they fear to recognize thee, or thou art dreaming. Thou shalt awake in prison.' And immediately I was back in the prison. Then I saw men lowering something into the ground, and looked, and it was I. Then I thought: 'Thou art dead, Radovitch, and dost wander in purgatory.'"

"He means his body was destroyed," supplemented Brodsky.

"And then I remembered one who had cared for me when I was in my cell, and I saw this little house, and thought: 'Thou canst easily take possession of this little house, Radovitch, and they will not know who resides within. Thus thou shalt have love and care and in time thou shalt forget that thou wert ever Radovitch. And thou shalt go to school and learn to be wise and good.' So I drove out the occupant of this little house, and entered into it, and just as I had entered thou didst come here to question me."

I can not describe the chill of fear that descended upon us—upon the jailer and me, as we gazed upon the motionless figure in the chair and listened to this recital. And what added tenfold to it was the sight of the child's body, empty of its owner and haunted by this bestial, lurking murderer. No pity stirred our breasts; but for Brodsky I think that we, too, should have become murderers.

Presently Brodsky began speaking again, in slow tones filled with emotion. He took the child's cold hand between his own.

"Radovitch," he said, "listen to what I will tell thee. Thou art truly dead; thou hast died and paid the full penalty for thy crimes. And because thou wert born to misfortune and sin and ignorance—doubtless in retribution for past wickedness—it may be that God will not hold thee to further accountance. Such things do not rest with me to decide, nor is there any human judgment that may fitly condemn thee, seeing that forgiveness is for God only. But, Radovitch, consider what thou hast done.

"Because thou didst die and find thyself alone thou hast sought out a house for lodgment. Thou hast broken into another's house and occupied it and driven out her that lived there. And thou hast done this unto the only one in the world that ever was kind to thee. Such a thing God may permit, but he assuredly will not forgive.

"Radovitch, thou hast stolen what is another's and hast brought misery to those who have done thee no evil. This is no house for thee. Depart."

"I must go?" stammered the voice pitifully.

"Thou must go," said Brodsky solemnly. "It may be that in his time God will again make a house for thee. Thou shalt be born again, where love and care and comfort such as thou hast not known shall meet thee. Then forgetfulness of the past shall also be granted thee. So go and wait in patience until the summons comes. Go! I adjure thee by——"

What was the adjuration of the doctor I do not know. It may have been some cabalistic invocation such as has been handed down among the wise men of the Jews from time immemorial. I heard only a whisper of words, saw the figure collapse, saw hatred and love, anger, repentance struggling upon the white face. And suddenly the figure fell backward in the chair, motionless.

"Wake up!" cried Brodsky, tapping the forehead and either cheek.

The figure yawned and stretched itself; the eyes opened again; the little girl's face appeared like the sun from behind a veil of cloud. She stared round her in wonder.

There was a cry behind us. A figure stumbled forward, fell down before the little girl and seized her in its arms. It was the jailer's wife. She knelt there, sobbing and laughing, and stroking the little hands and face, and not paying the least attention to Brodsky or to me. Her husband, trembling with fear, sank down beside her. I saw the beads of moisture spring to his forehead and roll down his cheeks. Brodsky took me by the arm. His face was whiter than that of the dead man had been; all the vitality seemed to have gone out from him.

"Come," he said. "Our work here is at an end."

As we withdrew the father rose and came tottering up to us. He seized the doctor's hand and kissed it.

"What can I do to show you my gratitude?" he cried. "You have given me back my child from worse than death."

Brodsky turned and regarded him solemnly.

"Pray for him," he said.

"For him?" the jailer cried. "That monster?"

"No human soul is ever cast away," said Brodsky quietly. "Not even of the worst of us. So pray for his."

"He will never come back?"

"Never, save through the gates of birth," the doctor answered.

"But where was she—my little girl—when she was driven away?" he cried.

Brodsky smiled weakly.

"If I could tell you that," he answered sadly, "I should know the secrets of life and death and eternity."

NOTE—This is the first of a series of stories, each complete in itself, dealing with Dr. Ivan Brodsky, "The Surgeon of Souls."

OZYMANDIAS

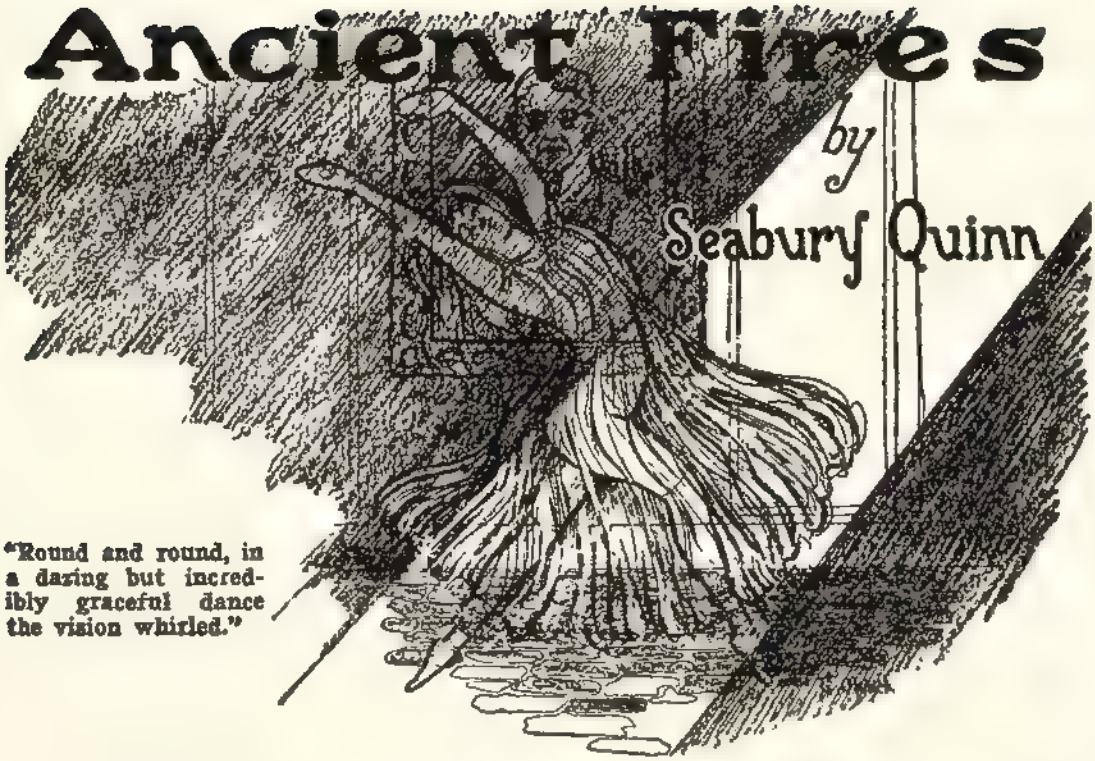
BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(Reprint)

I met a traveler from an antique land
  Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
  Half sunk, a shattered visage lies; whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
  Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
  The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
  "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
  Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
  The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Ancient Fires

by Seabury Quinn



"Round and round, in a dazing but incredibly graceful dance the vision whirled."

"*TIENS,* Friend Trowbridge, this is interesting." Jules de Grandin passed the classified page of the *Times* across the breakfast table and indicated one of the small advertisements with the polished nail of his well-groomed forefinger. "Regard this *avis,* if you please, and say if I am not the man."

Fixing my reading glasses firmly on my nose, I perused the notice he pointed out:

WANTED—A man of more than ordinary courage to undertake confidential and possibly dangerous mission. Great physical strength not essential, but indomitable bravery and absolute fearlessness in the face of seemingly supernatural manifestations are. This is a remarkable work and will require the services of a remarkable man. A fee up to $10,000 will be paid for the successful prosecution of the case. X. L. Selfridge, Attorney, Jennifer Building.

De Grandin's round blue eyes shone with elated anticipation as I put down the paper and regarded him across the cloth. "*Morbleu,* is it not an apple from the tree of Divine Providence?" he demanded, twisting the ends of his diminutive blond mustache ferociously. "A remarkable man for a remarkable work, do they say? *Cordieu,* but Jules de Grandin is that man, nor do I in any wise imply perhaps! You will drive me down to that so generous *soliciteur,* Friend Trowbridge, and we shall together collect from him this ten thousand dollars, or may I never hear the blackbirds whistle in the trees of St. Cloud again."

"Sounds like some bootlegger advertising for a first lieutenant," I discouraged, but he would not be gainsaid.

"We shall go, we shall most certainly go to see this remarkable lawyer who offers a remarkable fee to a remarkable man," he insisted, rising and dragging me from the table. "*Morbleu,* my friend, excitement is good, and gold is good, too; but gold and excitement together—*la, la,* they are a combination worthy of any

man's love! Come, we shall go right away, at once, immediately."

We went. Half an hour later we were seated across a flat-topped mahogany desk, staring at a thin, undersized little man with an oversized bald head and small, sharp, birdlike black eyes.

"This seems incredibly good, gentlemen," the little lawyer assured us when he had finished examining the credentials de Grandin showed. "I had hoped to get some ex-service man—some youngster who hadn't gotten his fill of adventure in the great war, perhaps—or possibly some student of psychic phenomena—but—my dear sir!"—he beamed on my friend—"to secure a man of your standing is more than I had dared hope. Indeed, I did not suspect such characters existed outside book covers."

"*Parbleu, Monsier l' Avoué,*" de Grandin replied with one of his impish smiles, "I have been in what you Americans call some tight places, but never have I been shut up in a book. Now, if you will be so good as to tell us something of this so remarkable mission you wish undertaken——" He paused, voice and eyebrows raised interrogatively.

"To be sure"—the attorney passed a box of cigars across the desk—"you'll probably consider this a silly sort of case for a man of your talents, but—well, to get down to brass tacks, I've a client who wants to sell a house."

"Ah?" de Grandin murmured noncommittally. "And we are to become indomitably fearless real estate brokers, perhaps?"

"Not quite," the lawyer laughed, "nothing quite as simple as that. You see, Redgables is one of the finest properties in the entire lake region. It lies in the very heart of the mountains, with a commanding view, contains nearly three thousand acres of good land, and, in fact, possesses nearly every requisite of an ideal country estate or a summer hotel or sanitarium. Normally, it's worth between three and four hundred thousand dollars; but, unfortunately, it possesses one drawback—a drawback which makes its market value practically nil. It's haunted."

"Eh, do you say so?" De Grandin sat up very straight in his chair and fixed his unwinking stare on the attorney. "*Parbleu,* it will be a redoubtable ghost whom Jules de Grandin can not eject for a fee of two hundred thousand francs! Say on, my friend; I burn with curiosity."

"The house was built some seventy-five years ago when that part of New York State was little better than a wilderness," the attorney resumed. "John Aglinberry, son of Sir Rufus Aglinberry, and the great-uncle of my client, was the builder. He came to this country under something of a cloud—pretty well estranged from his family—and built that English manor house in the midst of our hills as a refuge from all mankind, it seems.

"As a young man he'd served with the British army in India, and got mixed up in rather a nasty scandal. Went *ghazi*—fell in love with a native girl and threatened to marry her. There was a devil of a row. His folks used influence to have him dismissed from the service and cut off his allowance to force him back to England. After that they must have made life pretty uncomfortable for him, for when he inherited a pile of money from a spinster aunt, he packed up and came to America, building that beautiful house out there in the woods and living like a hermit the rest of his life.

"The girl's family didn't take matters much easier than Aglinberry's, it seems. Something mysterious happened to her before he left India—I imagine he'd have stayed there in

spite of hell and high water, if she'd lived.

"Somehow, the Aglinberry fortune petered out. John Aglinberry's younger brothers both came to this country and settled in New York, working at one thing and another till he died. They inherited the property share and share alike under our law; but it never did them any good. Neither of them was ever able to live in it, and they never could sell it. Something—mind you, I'm not saying it was a ghost—but something damned unpleasant, nevertheless, has run off every tenant who's ever attempted to occupy that place.

"My client is young John Aglinberry, great-nephew of the builder, and last of the family. He hasn't a cent to bless himself with, except the potential value of Redgables.

"That's the situation, gentlemen; a young man, heir to a baronetcy, if he wished to go to England to claim it, poorer than a church mouse, with a half-million dollar property eating itself up in taxes and no way to convert it into a dime in cash till he can find someone to demonstrate that the place isn't devil-ridden. Do you understand why we're willing to pay a ten thousand dollar fee—contingent on the success of re-establishing Redgables' good name?"

"*Tiens, Monsieur,*" de Grandin exclaimed, grinding the fire from his half-smoked cigar, "we do waste the time. I am all impatience to try conclusions with this property-destroying ghost who keeps your so deserving client out of the negotiation of his land and me from a ten thousand dollar fee. *Morbleu,* this is a case after my own heart! When shall we start for this so charming estate which is to pay me ten thousand dollars for ridding it of its specter tenants?"

JOHN AGLINBERRY, chiefly distinguished by a wide, friendly grin, met us at the railway station which lay some five miles from Redgables, and extended a warm handclasp in greeting. "It's mighty good of you gentlemen to come up here and give me a lift," he exclaimed as he shepherded us along the platform and helped stow our traps into the unkempt tonneau of a Ford which might have seen better days, though not recently. "Mr. Selfridge 'phoned me yesterday morning, and I hustled up here to do what I could to make you comfortable. I doubt you'd have been able to get any of the village folks to drive you over to the place—they're as frightened of it as they would be of a mad dog."

"But, *Monsieur,*" de Grandin expostulated, "do you mean to say you have been in that house by yourself this morning?"

"Uh-huh, and last night, too," our host replied. "Came up here on the afternoon train yesterday and tidied things up a bit."

"And you saw nothing, felt nothing, heard nothing?" de Grandin persisted.

"Of course not," the young man answered impatiently. "There isn't anything to see or feel, or hear, either, if you except the usual noises that go with a country place in springtime. There's nothing wrong with the property, gentlemen. Just a lot of silly gossip which has made one of the finest potential summer resorts in the county a drug on the market. That's why Mr. Selfridge and I are so anxious to get the statement of gentlemen of your caliber behind us. One word from you will outweigh all the silly talk these yokels can blab in the next ten years."

De Grandin cast me a quick smile. "He acknowledges our importance, my friend," he whispered. "Truly, we shall have to walk fast to live up to such a reputation."

Further conversation was cut short by our arrival at the gates of our future home. The elder Aglinberry had

spared no expense to reproduce a bit of England in the Adirondacks. Tall posts of stone flanked the high iron gate which pierced the ivy-mantled wall surrounding the park, and a wide graveled driveway, bordered on each side by a wall of cedars, led to the house, which was a two-story Tudor structure with shingles of natural red cedar from which the place derived its name. Inside, the house bore out the promise of its exterior. The hall was wide and stone-paved, wainscoted with panels of walnut and with a beamed ceiling of adz-hewn cedar logs and slabs. A field-stone fireplace, almost as large as the average suburban cottage's garage, pierced the north wall, and the curving stairs were built with wide treads and balustraded with hand-carved walnut. A single oil painting, that of the elder John Aglinberry, relieved the darkness of the wall facing the stairway.

"But, *Monsieur*, this is remarkable," de Grandin asserted as he gazed upon the portrait. "From the resemblance you bear your late kinsman you might easily be taken for his son—yes, *pardieu*, were you dressed in the archaic clothes of his period, you might be himself!"

"I've noticed the resemblance, too," young Aglinberry smiled. "Poor old Uncle John, gloomy-looking cove, wasn't he? Anyone would think all his friends were dead and he was making plans to visit the village undertaker himself."

The Frenchman shook his head reprovingly at the younger man's facetiousness. "Poor gentleman," he murmured, "he had cause to look sad. When you, too, have experienced the sacrifice of love, you may look saddened, my friend."

We spent the remainder of the afternoon surveying the house and surrounding grounds. Dinner was cooked on a portable camp outfit over blazing logs in the hall fireplace, and about 9 o'clock all three of us mounted the stairs to bed. "Remember," de Grandin warned, "if you hear or see the slightest intimation of anything which is not as it should be, you are to ring the bell beside your bed, my friend. Dr. Trowbridge and I shall sleep like the cat, with one eye open and claws alert."

"Not a chance," our host scoffed. "I slept here last night and never saw or heard anything more supernatural than a stray rat, and mighty few of those."

I MIGHT have slept half an hour or twice that long when a gentle nudge brought me wide awake and sitting bolt upright in bed. "Trowbridge, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin's voice came through the darkness from across the room, "rise and follow; I think I hear Monsieur Aglinberry's alarm bell!"

I slipped a bathrobe over my pajamas and took the loaded automatic and flashlight from under my pillow. "All right," I whispered, "I'm ready."

We stole down the hall toward our host's room, and de Grandin paused beside the door. Clearly we made out the sound of an untroubled sleeper's heavy breathing. "Guess you've been hearing things, de Grandin," I chuckled in a low voice, but he held up one slender hand in warning.

"P-s-st, be still!" he commanded. "Do not you hear it, too, my friend? Hark!"

I listened with bated breath, but no sound save the occasional ghostly creak of a floor-board came to my ears, then——

Faint, so faint it might have been mistaken for the echo of an imagined sound, had it not been for its insistence, I heard the light, far-away-sounding tinkle-tinkle of bells. "Tink-a-*tink*, a-*tink*-a-tink; tink-a-*tink*, a-*tink*-a-tink" they sounded, scarcely louder than the swishing of silk,

every third and fifth beat accentuated in an endless "circular" rhythm; but their music did not emanate from the room beyond the door. Rather, it seemed to me, the tiny, fairylike ringing came up the stairway from the hall below.

My companion seemed struck by the same thought, for he crept past me toward the stairhead, his soft-soled slippers making no more noise against the hardwood floor than the beating of a moth's wings against the night air.

Close behind him I slipped, my gun and flashlight held in instant readiness, but at sight of his eager, strained face as he paused at the top of the stair I forgot my weapons and stole forward to peep over his shoulder.

A shutter must have come unfastened at one of the small, high windows in the hall, for a patch of dim moonlight, scarcely more than three feet in diameter, lay upon the floor directly beneath the portrait of the elder Aglinberry, and against the circle of luminance a thin, almost impalpable wreath of smoke seemed drifting before a draft of air from the fireplace. I looked again. No, it was not smoke, it was something with a defined outline. It was—it was a wisp of muslin, air-light and almost colorless in its sheerness, but cloth, nevertheless. And now, as I gazed unbelievingly, something else seemed slowly taking form in the moonlight. A pair of narrow, high-arched feet and tapering, slender ankles, unclothed except for a double loop of bell-studded chains, were mincing and gyrating on flexible toes, while, fainter than the feet, but still perceptible, the outline of a body as fair as any that ever swayed to the tempo of music showed against the black background of the darkened hall like a figure dimly suggested in an impressionistic painting. Round and round, in a dazing but incredibly graceful dance the vision whirled, the hem of the muslin skirt standing outward with the motion of the pirouetting feet, the tiny, golden bells on the chain anklets sending out their faerie music.

"*Morbleu!*" de Grandin whispered softly to himself. "Do you see it, also, Friend Trowbridge?"

"I——" I began in a muted voice, but stopped abruptly, for a puff of passing breeze must have closed the shutter, cutting off the moonbeam as a theatrical spotlight is shut off by a stage electrician. The illusion vanished instantly. There was no elfin, dancing form before the painted likeness of old John Aglinberry, no sound of clinking anklets in the old house. We were just a pair of sleep-disheveled men in bathrobes and pajamas standing at a stairhead and staring foolishly into the darkness of a deserted hallway.

"I thought I saw——" I began again, but again I was interrupted, this time by the unmistakable clatter of the hand-bell in Aglinberry's room.

We raced down the corridor to him and flung open the door. "Monsieur Aglinberry!" de Grandin gasped, "did it—did anything come into your room? Dr. Trowbridge and I——"

The young man sat up in bed, grinning sheepishly at us in the double beam of our flashlights. "I must be getting a case of nerves," he confessed. "Never had the jumps like this before. Just a moment ago I fancied I felt something touch my lips—like the tip of a bat's wing, it was, soft as velvet, and so light I could scarcely feel it; but it woke me up, and I grabbed the bell and began ringing, like a fool. Funny, too"—he glanced toward the window—"it couldn't have been a bat, for I took particular pains to nail mosquito-netting over that window this morning. It's—why, it's *torn!*"

Sure enough, the length of strong

netting which our host had thoughtfully tacked across the windows of both our room and his as a precaution against early spring insects, was rent from top to bottom as though by a knife. "H'm," he muttered, "it *might* have been a bat, at that."

"To be sure," de Grandin agreed, nodding so vigorously that he resembled a Chinese mandarin, "it might, as you say, *Monsieur,* have been a bat. But I think you would sleep more safely if you closed the window." Crossing the room he drew the casement to and shot the forged iron bolt into place. "*Bon soir,* my friend"—he bowed formally at the doorway—"a good night, and be sure you leave your window closed."

"Would you gentlemen like to look at the property down by the lake?" Aglinberry asked as we finished our breakfast of bacon and eggs, coffee and fried potatoes the following morning.

"Assuredly," de Grandin replied as he donned topcoat and cap, slipping his ever-ready automatic pistol into his pocket, "a soldier's first caution should be to familiarize himself with the terrain over which he is to fight."

We marched down a wide, curving drive bordered by pollarded willows, toward the smooth sheet of water flashing in the early morning sunlight.

"We have one of the finest stands of native hardwood to be found anywhere in this part of the country," Aglinberry began, waving his stick toward an imposing grove to our right. "Just the timber alone is worth—well, of all the copper-riveted nerve!" he broke off angrily, hastening his pace and waving his cane belligerently. "See there? Some fool camper has started a fire in those woods. Hi, there, you! Hi, there; what're you doing?"

Hurrying through the trees we came upon a little clearing where a decrepit, weather-blistered van was drawn up beside a small spring, two moth-eaten-appearing horses tethered to a near-by tree and several incredibly dirty children wrestling and fighting on the short grass. A man in greasy corduroys lay full length on the ground, a black slouch hat pulled over his eyes, while another lounged in the doorway of the van. Two women in faded shawls and headkerchiefs and an amazing amount of pinchbeck jewelry were busily engaged, one in hewing down underbrush to replenish the camp fire, the other stirring some sort of savory mess in a large, smoke-blackened kettle which swung over the blazing sticks.

"What the devil do you mean by building a fire here?" Aglinberry demanded angrily as we came to a halt. "Don't you know you're likely to start a blaze in these woods? Go down to the lake if you want to camp; there's no danger of burning things up there."

The women looked at him in sullen silence, their fierce black eyes smoldering angrily under their straight black brows; but the man lying beside the fire was not minded to be hustled from his comfortable couch.

"Too mucha stone by da lake," he informed Aglinberry lazily, raising the hat from his face, but making no other move toward obeying the summons to quit. "Too mucha stone an' sand. I lika dissa grass to lay on. I stay here. See?"

"By George, we'll see about that!" replied our irate host. "You'll stay here, will you? Like hell you will!" Stepping quickly to the fire, he shouldered the crouching woman out of his path and scattered the blazing sticks from under the kettle with a vigorous kick of his heavy boot, stamping the flame from the brands and kicking

earth over the embers. "Stay here, will you?" he repeated. "We'll see about that. Pull your freight, and pull it in a hurry, or I'll have the whole gang of you arrested for trespass."

The reclining gipsy leaped to his feet as though propelled by a spring. "You tella me pulla da freight? You keek my fire out? *You?* Ha, I show you somet'ing!" His dirty hand flew to the girdle about his greasy trousers, and a knife's evil flash showed in the sunlight. "You t'ink you make da fool of Nikolai Brondovitch? I show you!"

Slowly, with a rolling tread which reminded me of a tiger preparing to leap, he advanced toward Aglinberry, his little, porcine eyes snapping vindictively, his bushy eyebrows bent into an almost straight line with the ferocity of his scowl.

"*Eh bien, Monsieur le Bohémien,*" Jules de Grandin remarked pleasantly, "were I in your shoes—and very dirty shoes they are, too—I would consider what I did before I did it." The gipsy turned a murderous scowl on him and stopped short in his tracks, his narrow eyes contracting to mere slits with apprehension. The Frenchman had slipped his pistol from his pocket and was pointing its uncompromising black muzzle straight at the center of the Romany's checked shirt.

"Meester," the fellow pleaded, sheathing his knife hurriedly and forcing his swarthy features into the semblance of a smile, "I maka da joke. I not mean to hurt your frand. I poor man, trying to make honest living by selling horses. I not mean to scare your frand. We taka da camp offa hees lan' right away."

"*Pardieu,* my friend, I think you will," de Grandin agreed, nodding approvingly. "You will take your so filthy wagon, your horses, your women and your brats from off this property. You leave at once, immediately, right away!" He waved his blue steel pistol with an authoritative gesture. "Come; I have already waited too long; try not my patience, I beseech you."

Muttering imprecations in their unintelligible tongue and showering us with looks as malignant as articulate curses, the gipsies broke camp under our watchful supervision, and we followed them down the grass-grown drive toward the lake front. We watched them off the land, then proceeded with our inspection of the estate.

REDGABLES was an extensive property and we spent the better part of the day exploring its farther corners. By nightfall all three of us were glad to smoke a sociable pipe and turn in shortly after dinner.

I was lying on my back, staring straight upward to the high ceiling of our chamber and wondering if the vision of the night before had been some trick of our imaginations, when de Grandin's sharp, strident whisper cut through the darkness and brought me suddenly wide-awake. "Trowbridge," he murmured, "I hear a sound. Someone is attempting entrance!"

I lay breathless a moment, straining my ears for any corroboration of his statement, but only the soughing of the wind through the evergreens outside and the occasional rasp of a bough against the house rewarded my vigil. "Rats!" I scoffed. "Who'd try to break into a house with such a reputation as this one's? Why, Mr. Selfridge told us even the tramps avoided the place as if it were a plague-spot."

"Nevertheless," he insisted as he drew on his boots and pulled a topcoat over his pajamas, "I believe we have uninvited guests, and I shall endeavor to mend their manners, if such they be."

There was nothing to do but follow him. Downstairs, tiptoe, our flashlights held ready and our pistols prepared for emergency, we stole through the great, dark hall, undid the chain-fastener of the heavy front door, and walked softly around the angle of the house.

At de Grandin's direction, we kept to the shadow of the tall, black-branched pine trees which grew near the house, watching the moonlit walls of the building for any evidence of a housebreaker.

"It is there the young Aglinberry sleeps," de Grandin observed in a low voice as he indicated a partly opened casement on the second floor, its small panes shining like nacre in the rays of the full moon. "I observe he has not obeyed our injunctions to close his sash in the night-time. *Morbleu*, that which we did see last night might have been harmless, my friend, but, again, it might have been—ah, my friend, look; *look!*"

Stealthily, silently as a shadow, a stooped form stole around the corner of the wall, paused huddled in a spot of darkness where the moonbeams failed to reach, then slowly straightened up, crept into the light, and began mounting the rough rubblestone side of the house, for all the world like some great, uncanny lizard from the preadamite days. Clinging to the protuberances of the rocks with claw-like hands, feeling for toeholds in the interstices where cement had weathered away, the thing slowly ascended, nearer and yet nearer Aglinberry's unlatched window.

"*Dieu de Dieu,*" de Grandin muttered, "if it be a phantom, our friend Aglinberry is in misfortune, for 'twas he himself who left his window unfastened. If it be not a ghost—*parbleu*, it had better have said its paternosters, for when he puts his head in that window, I fire!" I saw the glint of moonlight on the blue steel of his pistol barrel as he trained it on the climbing thing.

Inch by inch the creature—man or devil—crept up the wall, reached its talon hands across the stone sill, began drawing itself through the casement. I held my breath, expecting the roar of de Grandin's pistol each second, but a sudden gasp of astonishment beside me drew my attention from the creeping thing to my companion.

"Look, Friend Trowbridge, *regardez, s'il vous plaît!*" he bade me in a tremulous whisper, nodding speechlessly toward the window into which the marauder was disappearing like a great, black serpent into its lair. I turned my gaze toward the window again and blinked my eyes in unbelief.

An odd luminescence, as if the moon's rays had been focused by a lens, appeared behind the window opening. It was like a mirror of dull silver, or a light faintly reflected from a distance. Tiny bits of impalpable dust, like filings from a silversmith's rasp, seemed floating in the air, whirling, dancing lightly in the converging moon rays, circling about each other like dust-motes seen in a sun-shaft through a darkened room, driving together, *taking form.* Literally out of moonlight, a visible, discernible something was being made. Spots of shadow appeared against the phosphorescent gleam, alternate highlights and shadows became apparent, limning the outlines of a human face, a slender, oval face with smoothly-parted hair sleekly drawn across a high, broad forehead; a face of proud-mouthed, narrow-nosed beauty such as the highest-caste women of the Rajputs have.

A moment it seemed suspended there, more like the penumbra of a shadow than an actual entity, then seemed to surge forward, to lose its sharpness of outline, and blend, mys-

teriously, with the darkness of the night-prowler's form, as though a splash of mercury were suddenly thrown upon a slab of carbon.

A moment the illusion of light-on-darkness held, then a scream of wire-edged terror, mingled with mortal pain, shuddered through the quiet night as a lightning flash rips across a thunder cloud. The climber loosed both hands from the window sill, clawed frantically at the empty air above him, then hurtled like a plummet to the earth, almost at our feet.

Our flashlights shot their beams simultaneously on the fallen man's face as we reached his side, revealing the features of Nikolai Brondovitch, the gipsy Aglinberry had ordered off the place that morning.

But it was a different face from that the Romany had displayed when threatening Aglinberry or attempting to conciliate de Grandin. The eyes were starting from their sockets, the mouth hung open with an imbecile, hang-jawed flaccidity. And on the gipsy's lean, corded throat was a knotted swelling, as though a powerful clamp had seized and crushed the flesh together, shutting off breath and blood in a single mighty grasp. Both de Grandin and I recognized the thing before us for what it was—trust a physician to recognize it! Death is unique, and nothing in the world counterfeits it. The scoundrel had died before his body touched the ground.

"Nom d'un nom!" de Grandin murmured wonderingly. "And did you also see it, Friend Trowbridge?"

"I saw something," I answered, shuddering at the recollection.

"And what did you see?" his words came quickly, like an eager lawyer cross-examining a reluctant witness.

"It—it looked like a woman's face," I faltered, "but——"

"Nom de Dieu, yes," he agreed, almost hysterically, "a woman's face—a face with no body beneath it! *Parbleu,* my friend, I think this adventure is worthy of our steel. Come, let us see the young Aglinberry."

We hurried into the house and up the stairs, hammering on our host's door, calling his name in frenzied shouts.

"Eh, what's up?" his cheery voice responded, and next moment he unfastened the door and looked at us, a sleepy grin mantling his youthful face. "What's the idea of you chaps breaking a fellow's door down at this time o' night?" he wanted to know. "Having bad dreams?"

"Mon—Monsieur!" de Grandin stammered, his customary aplomb deserting him. "Do you mean—have you been *sleeping?"*

"Sleeping?" the other echoed. "What do you think I went to bed for? What's the matter, have you caught the family ghost?" He grinned at us again.

"And you have heard nothing, seen nothing—you do not know an entrance to your room was almost forced?" de Grandin asked incredulously.

"An entrance to my room?" the other frowned in annoyance, looking quizzically from one of us to the other. "Say, you gentlemen had better go back to bed. I don't know whether I'm lacking in a sense of humor or what my trouble is, but I don't quite get the joke of waking a man up in the middle of the night to tell him that sort of cock-and-bull story."

"Nom d'un chou-fleur!" De Grandin looked at me and shook his head wonderingly. "He has slept through it all, Friend Trowbridge!"

Aglinberry bristled with anger. "What're you fellows trying to do, string me?" he demanded hotly.

"Your hat, your coat, your boots,

Monsieur!' de Grandin exclaimed in reply. "Come outside with us; come and see the vile wretch who would have slaughtered you like a pig in the shambles. Come and behold, and we shall tell you how he died."

By mutual consent we decided to withhold certain details of the gipsy's death from the coroner's jury next day, and a verdict to the effect that the miscreant had come to his death while attempting to "break and enter the dwelling house of one John Aglinberry in the night-time, forcibly, feloniously and against the form of the statute in such case made and provided" was duly returned.

The gipsy was buried in the Potter's Field and we returned to our vigil in the haunted house.

Aglinberry was almost offensively incredulous concerning the manner of the gipsy's death. "Nonsense!" he exclaimed when we insisted we had seen a mysterious, faintly luminous face at the window before the would-be housebreaker hurtled to his death. "You fellows are so fed up on ghost-lore that you've let this place's reputation make you see things—things which weren't there."

"*Monsieur,*" de Grandin assured him with injured dignity, "it is that you speak out of the conceit of boundless ignorance. When you have seen one-half—*pardieu,* one-quarter or one-eighth—the things I have seen, you will learn not to sneer at whatever you fail to understand. As that so magnificent Monsieur Shakespeare did say, 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy'."

"Probably," our host interrupted, smothering a yawn, "but I'm content to let 'em stay there. Meantime, I'm going to bed. Good night." And up the stairs he marched, leaving us to share the warmth of the crackling pitch-pine fire.

De Grandin shook his head pityingly after the retreating youngster. "He is the perfect type of that Monsieur Babbitt," he confided. "Worldly, materialistic, entirely devoid of imagination. *Parbleu,* we have them in France, too! Did they not make mock of Pasteur, *le grand,* when he announced his discoveries to a skeptical world? Most assuredly. Like the poor, the materialist we have always with us. — Ha! what is that? Do you hear it, Trowbridge, my friend?"

Faintly, so faintly it was like the half-heard echo of an echo, the fine, musical jangle of tiny bells wafted to us through the still, cold air of the dark old house.

"In there, 'twas in the library it sounded!" the Frenchman insisted in an excited whisper as he leaped to his feet and strode across the hall. "Your light, Friend Trowbridge; quick, your light!"

I threw the beam of my electric torch about the high-walled, somber old reading room, but nothing more ghostly than the tall walnut bookcases, empty of books and laden only with dust these many years, met our eyes. Still the soft, alluring chime sounded somewhere in the shadows, vague and indefinite as the cobwebbed darkness about us, but insistent as a trumpet call heard across uncounted miles of night.

"*Morbleu,* but this is strange!" de Grandin asserted, circling the room with quick, nervous steps. "Trowbridge, Trowbridge, my friend, as we live, those bells are calling us, calling —ah, *cordieu,* they are here!"

He had halted before a carved panel under one of the old bookcases and was on his hands and knees, examining each figure of the conventionalized flowers and fruits which adorned its surface. With quick, questing fingers he felt the carvings, like a cracksman feeling out the com-

bination of a safe. *"Nom d'un fromage,* I have it!" he called in lilting triumph as he bore suddenly down upon a bunch of carved grapes and the panel swung suddenly inward upon invisible hinges. "Trowbridge, *mon ami, regardez vous!"*

Peering into the shallow opening left by the heavy, carved plank, we beheld a package carefully wrapped in linen, dust-covered and yellowed with age.

"Candles, if you please, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin commanded as he bore our find in triumph to the hall. "We shall see what secret of the years these bells have led us to." He sank into his armchair and began unwinding the linen bands.

"Ah? And what is this?" He unreeled the last of the bandages and displayed a small roll of red morocco leather, a compact little case such as an elder generation of men carried with them for supplying needles, buttons, thread and other aids to the womanless traveler. Inside the wallet was a length of tough, age-tanned parchment, and attached to it by a loop of silk was a single tiny hawk-bell of gold, scarcely larger than a bead, but capable of giving off a clear, penetrating tinkle as the parchment shook in de Grandin's impatient hands.

I looked over his shoulder in fascinated interest, but drew back with disappointment as I saw the vellum was covered with closely-written scrawls somewhat resembling shorthand.

"U'm?" de Grandin regarded the writing a moment, then tapped his even, white teeth with a meditative forefinger. "This will require much study, Friend Trowbridge," he murmured. "Many languages have I studied, and my brain is like a room where many people speak together—out of the babel I can distinguish but few words unless I bear my attention on some one talk. This"—he tapped the crinkling parchment—"is Hindustani, if I mistake not; but to translate it will require more time than these candles will burn. Nevertheless, we shall try."

He hurried to our bedroom, returning in a moment with a pad of paper and a fresh supply of candles. "I shall work here for a time," he announced, reseating himself before the fire. "It will be long before I am prepared for bed, and it may be well for you to seek repose. I shall make but poor company these next few hours."

I accepted the dismissal with an answering grin and, taking my candle, mounted the stairs to bed.

"*EH BIEN,* my friend, you do sleep like the dead—the righteous dead who have no fear of purgatory!" de Grandin's voice roused me the following morning.

The bright spring sunshine was beating into our chamber through the open casement, and a puff of keen breeze fluttered the trailing bedclothes, but my friend's face rivaled the brilliance of the breaking day. *"Triomphe!"* he exclaimed, brandishing a sheaf of papers above his blond head. "It is finished, it is complete, it is done altogether entirely. Attend me, my friend, listen with care, for you are not like to hear such a tale soon again:

Lord of my life and master of my heart: This day is the fulfilment of the fate overhanging the wretched woman who has unworthily been honored by your regard, for this night I was bidden by my father to choose whether I would be married by the priests to the god Khandoka and become a temple bayadere—and my lord well knows what the life of such an one is—or go to the shrine of Omkar, God of Destruction, to become *kurban.* I have chosen to make the leap, my lord, for there is no other way for Amari.

We have sinned, thou against thy people and I against mine, in that we did dare defy *varna* and love, when such a love is forbidden between the races. *Varna* forbids

it, the commands of thy people and mine forbid it, and yet we loved. Now our brief dream of *kailas* is broken as the mists of morning break and fly before the scarlet lances of the sun, and thou returnest to thy people; Amari goes to her fate.

By the leap I assure my sinful spirit of a resting place in *kailas*, for to the *kurban* all sins are forgiven, even unto that of taking the life of a Brahmin or giving herself in love to one of another race; but she who retreats from the leap commits a sin with each step so great that a thousand reincarnations can not atone for it.

In this life the walls of *varna* stand between us, but, perchance, there may come a life when Amari inhabits the body of a woman of the sahib's race, or my lord and master may be clothed in the flesh of one of Amari's people. These things it is not given Amari to know, but this she knows full well: Throughout the seven cycles of time which shall endure through all the worlds and through all eternity, when worlds and the gods themselves shall have shuddered into dust, Amari's heart is ever and always inclined to the sahib, and the walls of death or the force of life shall not keep her from him. Farewell, master of Amari's breath, perchance we shall meet again upon some other star, and our waking spirits may remember the dream of this unhappy life. But ever, and always, Amari loves thee, sahib John.

"Yes?" I asked as he finished reading. "And then?"

"*Parbleu*, my friend, there was no then!" he answered. "Listen, you do not know India. I do. In that so depraved country they do consider that the woman who goes to the bloody shrine of the god Omkar and hurls herself down from a cliff upon his bloody altar attains to sainthood. It was that which this poor one meant when she did speak of 'the leap' in her farewell note to her white lover. *Kurban* is the word in their so detestable language for human sacrifice, and when she speaks of attaining *kailas* she refers to their heathenish word for heaven. When she says *varna* stood between them she did mean caste. *Cordieu*—you English, you Americans! Always you drive yourselves crazy with thoughts of what should and what should not be done. *Nom d'un coq!* Why did not this Monsieur Aglinberry the elder take this Hindoo woman to wife, if he loved her, and thumb his nose at her brown-skinned relatives and his fair-eyed English kin as well? 'Tis what a Frenchman would have done in like case. But no, he must needs allow the woman he loved to hurl herself over a cliff for the edification of a crowd of monkey-faced heathen who are undoubtedly stewing in hell at this moment, while he ran overseas to America and built him a mansion in the wilderness. A mansion, *pardieu!* A mansion without the light of love in its rooms or the footfalls of little children on its floors. *Nom de Dieu de nom de Dieu*, a mansion of melancholy memories, it is! *À bas* such a people! They deserve *la prohibition*, nothing better!" He walked back and forth across the room in a fury of disgust, snapping his fingers and scowling ferociously.

"All right," I agreed, laughing in spite of myself, "we'll grant all you say; but where does that get us as regards Redgables? If the ghost of this Hindoo girl haunts this house, how are we going to lay it?"

"How should I know?" he returned peevishly. "If the ancient fires of this dead woman's love burn on the cold hearth of this *sacré* house, who am I to put them out? Oh, it is too pitiful, too pitiful; that such a love as theirs should have been sacrificed on the altar of *varna*—caste!"

"Hullo, hullo, up there!" came a cheery hail from the hall below. "You chaps up yet? Breakfast is ready, and we've got callers. Come down."

"Breakfast!" de Grandin snorted disgustedly. "He talks of breakfast in a house where the ghost of murdered love dwells! But"—he turned an impish grin on me—"I hope he has compounded some of those so delicious flap-the-jacks for us, even so."

"DR. DE GRANDIN, this is Dr. Wiltsie," Aglinberry introduced as we descended to the hall. "Dr. Trowbridge, Dr. Wiltsie. Wiltsie is superintendent of a sanitarium for the feeble-minded over there"—he waved his arm in a vague gesture—"and when he heard Dr. de Grandin was in the neighborhood, he came over for a consultation. It seems—oh, you tell him your troubles, Wiltsie."

Dr. Wiltsie was a pleasant-looking young man with a slightly bald head and large-lensed, horn-rimmed spectacles. He smiled agreeably as he hastened to comply with Aglinberry's suggestion. "Fact is, doctor," he began as de Grandin piled his plate high with "flap-the-jacks," "we've got a dam' peculiar case over at Thornwood. It's a young girl who's been in our charge for the past twelve years—ever since she was ten years old. The poor child suffered a terrible fright when she was about six, according to the history we have of her case—horses of the carriage in which she and her mother were riding ran away, threw 'em both out, killed the mother and—well, when they picked the youngster up she was just one of God's little ones. No more reason than a two-months-old baby.

"Her family's rich enough, but she has no near relatives, so she's been in our care at Thornwood, as I said, for the past twelve years. She's always been good as gold, scarcely any trouble at all, sitting on the bed or the floor and playing with her fingers or toes, like an infant, most of the time; but lately she's been acting up like the devil. Fact. Tried to brain the nurse with a cup three nights ago, and made a break at one of the matrons yesterday morning. From a simple, sweet-tempered little idiot she's turned into a regular hell-cat. Now, if she'd been suffering from ordinary dementia, I'd——"

"Very good, very good, my friend," de Grandin replied as he handed his plate to Aglinberry for further replenishment. "I shall be delighted to look at your patient this morning. *Parbleu,* a madhouse will be a pleasant contrast to this never enough to be execrated place!"

"He likes my house," Aglinberry commented to Dr. Wiltsie with a sardonic grin as we rose and prepared to go to the sanitarium.

THORNWOOD SANITARIUM was a beautiful, remodeled private country home, and differed in no wise from the near-by estates except that the park about the house was enclosed in a high stone wall topped with a chevaux-de-frise of barbed wire.

"How's Mary Ann, Miss Underwood?" Wiltsie asked as we entered the spacious central hall and paused at the door of the executive office.

"Worse, doctor," replied the competent-looking young woman in nurse's uniform at the desk. "I've sent Mattingly up to her twice this morning, but the dosage has to be increased each time, and the medicine doesn't seem to hold as well."

"H'm," Wiltsie muttered noncommitally, then turned to us with an anxious look. "Will you come to see the patient, gentlemen? You, too, Aglinberry, if you wish. I imagine this'll be a new experience for you."

Upstairs, we peered through the small aperture in the door barring the demented girl's room. If we had not been warned of her condition, I might easily have taken the young woman asleep on the neat, white cot for a person in perfect health. There was neither the emaciation nor the obesity commonly seen in cases of dementia, no drawing of the face, not even a flaccidity of the mouth as the girl lay asleep.

Her abundant dark hair had been clipped short as a discouragement to the vermin which seem naturally to gravitate to the insane in spite of

their keepers' greatest care, and she was clothed in a simple muslin nightdress, cut modestly at the neck and without sleeves. One cheek, pale from confinement, but otherwise flawless, lay pillowed on her bent arm, and it seemed to me the poor girl smiled in her sleep with the wistfulness of a tired and not entirely happy child. Long, curling lashes fringed the ivory lids which veiled her eyes, and the curving brows above them were as delicately penciled and sharply defined as though drawn on her white skin with a camel's hair brush.

"*La pauvre enfant!*" de Grandin murmured compassionately, and at the sound of his voice the girl awoke.

Gone instantly was the reposeful beauty from her face. Her lips stretched into a square like the mouth of one of those old Greek tragic masks, her large, brown eyes glared fiercely, and from her gaping red mouth issued such a torrent of abuse as might have brought a blush to the face of the foulest fishwife in Billingsgate.

Wiltsie's face showed a dull flush as he turned to us. "I'm dashed if I can understand it," he admitted. "She goes on this way for hours on end, now."

"Eh, is it so?" de Grandin responded. "And what, may I ask, have you been doing for this condition? It appears more like delirium than like dementia, my friend."

"Well, we've been administering small doses of brandy and strychnin, but they don't seem to have the desired effect, and the doses have to be increased constantly."

"Ah?"—de Grandin's smile was slightly satirical—"and has it never occurred to you to employ hypnotics? Hyoscin, by example?"

"By George, it didn't!" Wiltsie confessed. "Of course, hyoscin would act as a cerebral sedative, but we'd never thought of using it."

"Very well, I suggest you employ a hypodermic injection of hyoscin hypobromid," de Grandin dismissed the case with an indifferent shrug of his shoulders, but Aglinberry, moved by that curiosity which is akin to fascination felt by the normal person regarding the insane, looked past him at the raving girl inside the cell.

An instant change came over her. From a cursing, blaspheming maniac, the girl became a quiet, sorrowful-looking child, and on her suddenly calmed face was such a look of longing as I have seen children undergoing strict diet give some particularly toothsome and forbidden dainty.

Young Aglinberry suppressed a shudder with difficulty. "Poor child," he muttered, "poor, poor little girl, to be so lovely and so hopeless!"

"*Oui, Monsieur,*" de Grandin agreed moodily as we went down the stairs, "you do well to pity her, for the intelligence—the very soul of her—has been dead these many years; only her body remains alive, and—*pitié de Dieu*—what a life it is! Ah, if only some means could be found to graft the healthy intelligence animating a sick body into that so healthy body of hers, what an economy!" He lapsed into moody silence, which remained unbroken during our drive back to Redgables.

The sun had gone down in a blaze of red against the western sky, and the pale new moon was swimming easily through a tumbling surf of a bank of foaming cirrus clouds when the deep-throated, belling bay of a hound came echoing to us from the grounds outside the old house. "*Grand Dieu!*" de Grandin leaped nervously from his chair. "What is that? Do they hunt in this country while the mating season is but blossoming into flower among the wild things?"

"No, they don't," Aglinberry answered testily. "Someone has let his dogs out on my land. "Come on; let's chase 'em off. I won't have 'em poaching on the game here like that."

We trailed out of the hall and walked quickly toward the sound of the baying, which rose fuller and fuller from the region of the lake. As we neared the dogs, the sound of human voices became audible. "That you, Mr. Aglinberry?" a man called, and the flash of an electric torch showed briefly among the new-leafed thickets by the waterfront.

"Yes," our host answered shortly. "Who the devil are you, and what are you doing here?"

"We're from Thornwood, sir," the man answered, and we saw the gleam of his white hospital uniform under his dark topcoat. "The crazy girl, Mary Ann, got away about an hour ago, and we're trailing her with the hounds. She went completely off her head after you left this morning, and fought so they couldn't give her the hypo without strapping her. After the injection she quieted down, but when the matron went to her room with dinner she suddenly woke up, threw the woman against the wall so hard she almost cracked her ribs, and got clean away. She can't have gotten far, though, running over this broken country in her bare feet."

"Oh, hell!" Aglinberry stormed, striking a bush beside the path a vicious slash with his stick. "It's bad enough to have my place overrun with gipsies and gossiped about by all the country yaps in the county, but when lunatics get to making a hangout of it, it's too much!

"Hope you find her," he flung back over his shoulder as he turned toward the house. "And for the Lord's sake, if you do get her, keep her at Thornwood. I don't want her chasing all over *this* place!"

"*Monsieur*——" de Grandin began, but Aglinberry cut him short.

"Yes, I know what you'll say," he broke in, "you want to tell me a ghost-woman will protect me from the lunatics, just as she did from the gipsy, don't you?"

"No, my friend," de Grandin began with surprizing mildness, "I do not think you need protection from the poor mad one, but—." He broke off with his sentence half spoken as he stared intently at an object hurrying toward us across a small clearing.

"Good God!" Aglinberry exclaimed. "It's she! The crazy girl!"

Seemingly gone mad himself, he rushed toward the white-robed figure in the clearing, brandishing his heavy stick. "I'll handle her," he called back, "I don't care how violent she is; I'll handle her!"

In another moment he was half-way across the cleared space, his thick walking stick poised for a blow which would render the maniac unconscious.

Any medical student with the most elementary knowledge of insanity could have told him a lunatic is not to be cowed by violence. As though the oaken cudgel had been a wisp of straw, the maniac rushed toward him, then stopped a scant dozen feet away and held out her tapering arms.

"John," she called softly, a puzzling, exotic thickness in her pronunciation. "John, *sahib*, it is I!"

Aglinberry's face was like that of a man suddenly roused from sound slumber. Astonishment, incredulity, joy like that of a culprit reprieved as the hangman knots the noose about his neck, shone on his features. The threatening club fell with a soft thud to the turf, and he gathered the madwoman's slender body to his breast, covering her upturned face with kisses.

"Amari, my Amari; Amari, my beloved!" he crooned in a soft, sobbing voice. "Oh, my love, my precious, precious love. I have found you; I have found you at last!"

The girl laughed lightly, and in her laughter there was no hint or taint of madness. "Not Amari, Mary Ann in this life, John," she told him, "but yours, John *sahib*, whether we stand beside the Ganges or the Hudson, beloved through all the ages."

"Ah, got her, sir?" The hospital attendants, a pair of bloodhounds tugging at the leash before them, broke through the thicket at the clearing's farther side. "That's right, sir; hold her tight till we slip the straitjacket on her."

Aglinberry thrust the girl behind him and faced the men. "You can't have her," he announced uncompromisingly. "She's mine."

"Wha—what?" the attendant stammered, then turned toward the underbrush and called to some invisible companion. "Hey, Bill, come 'ere; there's *two* of 'em!"

"You can't have her," Aglinberry repeated as two more attendants reinforced the first pair. "She's going to stay with me—always."

"Now, look here, sir," the leader of the party argued, "that girl's a dangerous lunatic; she nearly killed a matron this evenin', an' she's been regularly committed to Thornwood Sanitarium. We've tracked her here, an' we're goin' to take her back."

"Over the dead corpse of Jules de Grandin," the Frenchman interrupted as he pressed forward. "*Parbleu*, me, I am in authority here. I shall be responsible for her conduct."

The man hesitated a moment, then shrugged his shoulders. "It's your funeral if anything happens on account o' this," he warned. "Tomorrow Dr. Wiltsie will start legal proceedings to get her back. You can't win."

"Ha, can I not?" the little Frenchman's teeth gleamed in the moonlight. "My friend, you do not know Jules de Grandin. There is no lunacy commission in the world to which I can not prove her sanity. I do pronounce her cured, and the opinion of Jules de Grandin of the Sorbonne is not to be lightly sneezed upon, I do assure you!"

To Aglinberry he said: "Pick her up, my friend; pick her up and bear her to the house, lest the stones bruise her tender feet. Dr. Trowbridge and I will follow and protect you. *Parbleu*"—he glared defiantly about him—"me, I say nothing shall separate you again. Lead on!"

"For heaven's sake, de Grandin," I besought as we followed Aglinberry and the girl toward the house, "what does this all mean?"

"*Morbleu*," he nodded solemnly at me, "it means we have won ten thousand dollars, Friend Trowbridge. No more will the ghost of that so pitiful Hindoo woman haunt this house. We have earned our fee."

"Yes, but——" I pointed mutely toward our host as he strode through the moonlight with the girl in his arms.

"Ah—that?" he laughed a silent, contented laugh. "That, my friend, is a demonstration that the ancient fires of love die not, no matter how much we heap them with the ashes of hate and death.

"The soul of Amari, the sacrificed Hindoo girl, has come to rest in the body of the lunatic, Mary Ann, just as the soul of John Aglinberry the elder was reborn into the body of his namesake and double, John Aglinberry the younger. Did not the deceased Indian girl promise that she would some day come back to her forbidden lover in another shape? *Parbleu*, but she has fulfilled her vow! Always have the other members of Aglinberry's family been unable to live in this house, because they were of the clan who had helped separate the elder lovers.

"Now, this young man, knowing nothing of his uncle's intimate affairs, but bearing in his veins the

blood of the elder Aglinberry, and on his face the likeness of the uncle, too, must have borne within his breast the soul of the disappointed man who ate out his heart in sorrow and loneliness in this house which he had builded in the American woods. And the spirit of Amari, the Hindoo, who has kept safe the house from alien blood and from the members of her soulmate's family who would have robbed him of his inheritance, did find near at hand the healthy body of a lunatic whose soul—or intelligence, if you please—had long since sped, and entered thereinto to dwell on earth again. Did you not see sanity and longing looking out of her eyes when she beheld him in the madhouse this morning, my friend? Sanity? But yes, it was recognition, I tell you!

"Her violence? 'Twas but the clean spirit of the woman fighting for mastery of a body long untenanted by an intelligence. Were you to attempt to play a long-disused musical instrument, Trowbridge, my friend, you could make but poor work of it at first, but eventually you would be able to produce harmony. So it was in this case. The spirit sought to use a long-disused brain, and at first the music she could make was nothing but noise. Now, however, she has secured mastery of her instrument, and henceforth the body of Mary Ann will function as that of a healthy, sane woman. I, Jules de Grandin, will demonstrate her sanity to the world, and you, my friend, shall help me. Together we shall win, together we shall make certain that these lovers, thwarted in one life, shall complete this cycle in happiness.

"*Eh bien,*" he twisted the ends of his blond mustache and set his hat at a rakish angle on the side of his head, "it is possible that somewhere in space there waits for me the spirit of a woman whom I have loved and lost in another life. I wonder, when she comes, if I, like the lucky young Aglinberry yonder, shall 'wake, and remember, and understand'?"

A Five-Minute Story

THE MARMOSET

By MARC R. SCHORER and AUGUST W. DERLETH

THE dark figure of a man slunk silently through the byways and alleys of Florence. He kept to the clutching shadows, avoiding the moonlight as much as possible. Once, when he unwittingly stepped into a bright patch of light, the rays of the moon gleamed brightly on something visible below the belt of his doublet. But he hastily drew back into the shadows and the gleam vanished. Once he halted and listened attentively because he thought he had heard a sound, but it was only a cat. Again, a bat swept by him in the darkness, and he shuddered, but it flew out in the moonlight and wheeled about in the calm summer air, casting a grotesque shadow upon the paving stones in the patch of light. He watched it, fascinated. A moth whirred out of its retreat into the moonlight, and, before he quite grasped the rapidity of the thing, the man saw the bat sweep downward, and the moth was no longer there.

He smiled in secret admiration of the feat. Like a bat he would accomplish his object under the sheltering robe of night. He glanced eagerly down the street. A single, feebly illuminated window greeted his gaze; but it was a window in the house to which he was directed. He fumed impatiently and glanced up at the moon, which was already starting on its descent to the westward.

For quite some time he stood there in the shadows. Messer Marri was late in retiring. But no matter, the watching man would attain his object, if wait he must until morning. The window was dark now, but he must bide his time and give the magician a space in which to fall into slumber. There was no doubt that it was Messer Marri who had bewitched his daughter. And now she was gone! His hand wandered to the hilt of his dagger and he grasped the weapon to make certain that it was still firmly in its place.

What was it he saw about the door of the magician's squat residence? He gazed intently at it. It was naught else but the figure of the wizard leaving the house and starting down the street.

Messer Como watched the magician silently and wondered where he could be going. Suddenly he was seized with the idea of entering the house and secreting himself therein in Messer Marri's absence. He slunk forward again and soon he was pushing at the door of the house. It yielded to his touch, and Messer Como entered.

There was a patch of moonlight on the floor, and Messer Como searched for a hiding place. He noticed glowing embers in the grate and wondered for what Messer Marri had needed a fire on such a warm night. Something shot across the patch of moonlight, and a second later Messer Como felt it brushing against his legs. A cat, perhaps. He reached downward and struck the furry mass. At his action the injured creature started to gibber demoniacally. It was gone now and sat in the moonlight shaking a tiny fist at Messer Como. It was a marmoset, and its big eyes caught and reflected the moonlight as it blinked them furiously at Messer Como.

Messer Como went over to it and attempted to pacify it, but his efforts only served to increase the fury of the little beast. It gibbered incessantly, and Messer Como apprehensively wondered how quickly Messer Marri would return. For a minute he considered dispatching the animal, but then he thought better of it and drew back into the shadows, leaving the marmoset to itself.

For a short space the creature remained silent, and Messer Como was about to breathe a sigh of relief, when it again started to chatter, more vehemently than before, and at the same time Messer Como heard a step resound in the court without. He half unloosed his dagger and felt his other weapon in the bosom of his doublet. The marmoset gibbered shrilly and jumped up and down on the stone floor in its anger.

The door opened and Messer Marri entered. He halted at the threshold and stared at his pet.

"Aha," said he, "something has disturbed my little pet. Is it not so, Chero?" He walked over to the candles in the bracket. "Perhaps," he continued, "perhaps we have a visitor." He removed a candle and walked over to the fireplace. "We shall see, Chero. In a space."

He lit the candle at the embers, and, without glancing about him, walked to the sconce and ignited the remaining flambeaux. He turned, and his eyes fell upon Messer Como standing quietly near the entrance, his hand guiltily clutching the hilt of the dagger. The magician glanced at the marmoset.

"You see, Chero, I was correct. We have a visitor."

The animal blinked solemnly back at him and at intervals it gibbered excitedly. Messer Marri continued.

"Sit down, Messer Como, sit down. I am sure that your intentions are of the best, even though your hand rests upon your dagger. Possibly a habit, Messer Como, most possibly a habit." He turned to the animal on the floor again. "It is most fortunate that he has come, eh, Chero?"

The creature moved forward and caught at Messer Marri's robe and in a few seconds it was perched upon his shoulder. In a monotone Messer Marri spoke a few words to his pet. The monkey jumped to the floor and raced over to Messer Como, and, almost before Messer Como was aware of it, the marmoset was running off with his dagger. But he contented himself with the thought that he still had another dagger in the form of a stiletto in the bosom of his doublet. The wizard addressed Messer Como.

"Yes, Messer Como, it is *so* fortunate that you have come. I am so in need of someone to aid me. It is kind of you." He smiled sardonically.

Messer Como strove to answer but he was totally unnerved by the calm of his would-be victim.

"Ah, yes, Messer Como. Today have I compounded two liquids, both poison. One should kill within the quarter-hour; the other not for two months. I am very much in need of someone to test these for me, Messer Como."

He smiled, but the glint in his eyes belied the smile. He continued.

"First, I think, we shall try the more deadly of the two." He moved over to a shelf near the fireplace, from which he removed two phials.

Meanwhile Messer Como sat. He uttered not a sound, but stared at the magician, fascinated. All his plans of vengeance had dissolved into thin air, and his one thought was escape from this fiend who threatened his existence. He was seated near the open door, but Messer Marri's marmoset, which was between him and the door, was fingering the dagger it had stolen, and, once in a space, it glared evilly at Messer Como. Undoubtedly the animal could not kill, but even a scratch from the weapon would suffice to dispatch one, for Messer Como had taken the precaution to dip the end of the blade into a deadly compound. The window as a means of escape was too far distant. Dully he watched the wizard at his task of removing the phials. Messer Marri walked over and stood before him. He held aloft a phial and spoke.

"This, Messer Como, is the more deadly." The liquid was as colorless as the glass that contained it. "A drop, Messer, or two drops, will plunge you into the most excruciating pains you can experience. While you will not be conscious of any exterior pain, you will nevertheless suffer most horribly." He uncorked the phial as he spoke. "First, Messer Como, there will be a terrible burning feeling as the liquid travels down the gullet. But that, Messer, is nought compared to the gnawing pain in the vitals. A thousand times you will wish yourself dead; a thousand times you will regret that you had ever been born. Then, Messer, it will attack your brain in a most subtle manner. All you see will appear a bright glaring red and suddenly you will go blind."

He looked at Messer Como suggestively. Messer Como's forehead was covered with a cold sweat of terror.

"But," continued the wizard, "if I should see that the poison is beginning to take effect, I shall possibly give you a few drops of a mixture which I have concocted to counteract its effect. *Possibly,* Messer." The ominous accent on the word "possibly" did not escape Messer Como's notice. "And, Messer, if you but

taste the other liquid" (here he removed the stopper of the remaining phial) "you will wish to be back in the tortures of the first poison. The first poison is merciful, in comparison with the latter. For two whole months, Messer, you will live upon a rack. Everything you touch will seem like hot coal; everything you eat will taste like putrefied flesh—but enough of my inadequate description. You shall see for yourself."

Messer Como seemed to have shrunk in his clothes; for he sat immobile, staring at the marmoset that had defeated his purpose.

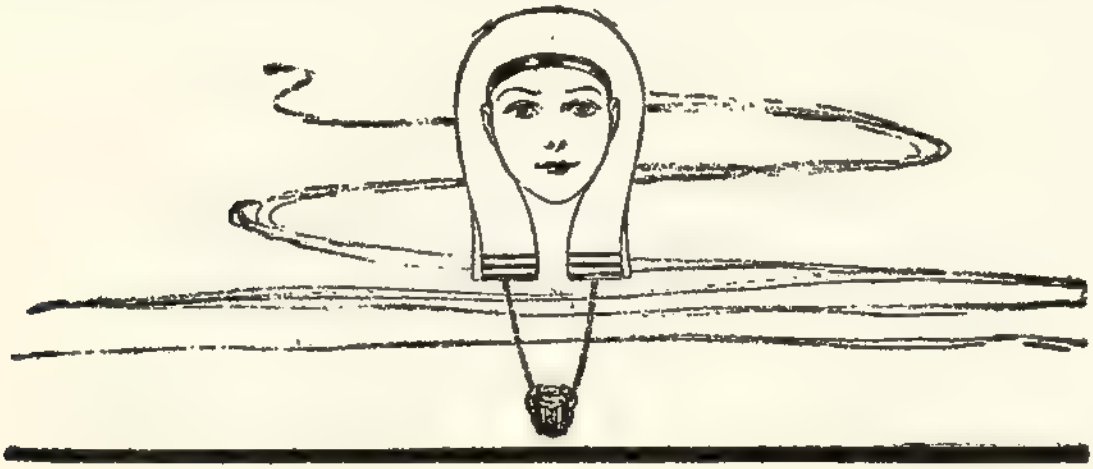
The magician was advancing toward him, the phials containing the fatal poisons grasped firmly in his hands. But at that moment the wizard's pet leapt away from the door. With a hoarse cry Messer Como flung himself into the court without.

Calmly the magician poured the water in the phials out upon the flagstones at the threshold. He stood in the doorway and chuckled exultantly to himself, the marmoset clinging to his doublet, as he watched Messer Como run swiftly down the street. It was simple, he reflected, so simple to play upon this man's imagination. He had come to murder him, had he? The wizard laughed. Poison! He had none in his residence, for that very day the Duke di Medici had purchased his entire stock. He laughed again and stared after Messer Como, almost out of sight down the long street.

But the fury of Messer Como was too much for him to contain; so he halted, half turned, and saw the magician standing in the doorway. In the space of a second Messer Como had formulated a plan. He left the center of the street and melted into the shadows on the side. He grasped the stiletto in his bosom. The blade of this tool had been poisoned. So Messer Marri would poison him, eh? Well, he would show him; he would give him a generous taste of his own medicine. Hidden by the shadows he crept toward the magician's house.

He was close enough now; he could easily reach the wizard with his weapon from where he stood. He drew his stiletto from his doublet, and, raising his arm, threw it with all his strength; then turned and fled fleetly down the street. There was a brilliant flash in the moonlight, a shrill, piercing scream, and the magician crumpled to the flagstones before his house.

For days afterward people wondered at the significance of the cold body of the magician with the stiff marmoset impaled to his breast by the long-bladed stiletto.



The Bracelet

by Talbert Josselyn

"He raised the limp arm and scrutinized it. Set close together on the smooth skin were two tiny, dark blue punctures."

AS THEY ascended the steps of the Colonel Chase home, Mrs. Radbourne turned to her husband.

"I hope," she said dispassionately, as though merely repeating a time-worn phrase, "that you will remember yourself this evening. You know how little wine it takes to make you silly, and"—she paused—"how that silliness reflects on me. Even though you have been long known as 'that Jack Radbourne', please remember that I still have a name and position of my own to maintain."

Radbourne made no reply; none was expected. So the two entered the house.

During dinner, he caught her meaning glance across the table, shot between phrases of an animated conversation she was having with the colonel. Radbourne lowered his glass, pushed it away, and frowned at himself. What a fool he was to have to be warned and watched at five-and-forty! He looked sidewise at his table partner, the young widow Grayson. The corners of her mouth were drawn down as though from a suppressed smile. Confound her!—she had seen the glance and divined its meaning.

Radbourne bit his lip. She was always looking for such things, and telling of them. A week before, at his house, when he had been forced to cut down the size of his highball, it was she of all the guests who had seen, and understood; and the next day he had been greeted by a friend as "Two-Finger Jack."

Radbourne found himself fast losing his temper. He could tell a few things on his own account about the widow Grayson, if it came to that. Yes, and she wasn't the only one. He glowered about the table. There were half a dozen of that group—"of the social elect," he sneered—whose past wouldn't bear too close scrutiny. Wouldn't he like to show some of them up, though! Expose them right there at the table. Hypocrites. Whited sepulchers. That was what they were—whited sepulchers. He'd show their real color if he got a chance.

He looked at his wife and felt a warm glow of pride. He himself might be a no-account, feather-blown-by-the-wind sort of man; even the gibe that he was too weak to be bad was more than half true; but, by heaven—and his fists tightened—the most prying had never been able to lay a finger on anything his wife had ever done. There she sat, their acknowledged leader—the city's social leader—Mrs. John Radbourne. The old saying that she had married him for his bank account had come from spite. He knew 'em! Whited sepulchers.

Who was it that had put him into this train of thought? Oh, yes, the widow Grayson. Damn the widow!

He reached for his glass.

On went dinner with increasing flow of animated conversation. Gradually this talk turned toward reminiscence, toward adventure in far corners of the world, and this brought a silence so that all might listen to each tale in turn.

"Come," said the colonel at length, nodding toward the florid-featured man who had just finished speaking. "Come, I can tell a story worth two of that. Yes, and I'll leave it to the others whether or not I'm right."

The dinner was over, and the florid man had been telling an East Indian experience. On the colonel's words there was a clapping of hands and a rearranging of chairs; the colonel was a famous story teller.

"The best of it is," went on the colonel, "that I have the very object on which the story, or rather legend, is based. Oh, Adams. Go into my study and get the small wooden box lying on the writing table." When the box had been placed in his hands, he continued. "All of you know my keen interest in Egyptian antiques. Well, several years ago I chanced to do Professor Ramsgate, the celebrated archeologist, a small favor, and thought no more about it. Yesterday I received this box from him. In his series of excavations near the site of ancient Thebes he came upon a marvelous rock tomb containing the mummified body of a king of one of the earlier dynasties. Among the many other objects of art that had been buried with the king was, as the professor puts it in his accompanying letter, 'this little thing which I send as a slight token of remembrance.'"

The colonel opened the box and took out a bracelet. He held it up.

"The bracelet itself is of bronze," he explained, "and the coiled serpent attached to it, of turquoise. If you look closely you will see that the serpent is a species of cobra, that it is furiously angry, and is in the act of striking." He slipped the bracelet on his wrist. "See, when it is worn, how the cobra's bared fangs almost touch the flesh of the arm. By the least pressure they actually will touch—in fact, will readily sink in."

He handed the bracelet to Mrs. Radbourne for closer inspection; she in turn passed it to the gentleman on her left, and so on around the table. When it came to the young widow Grayson, she started to slip it on her wrist.

"Hold on!" cried the colonel. "Don't do that! Wait until you have heard its story. Then you can put it on—if you still want to."

Mrs. Grayson, catching the new tone in the colonel's voice, dropped the bracelet with a little shudder.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I don't want to touch it again! I know there must be something awful about it from the way you spoke. I wouldn't put it on for worlds."

Radbourne, face a-flush, leered at her with a grin. "What are you 'fraid of? Think it might bite?" He chuckled, picked up the bracelet, and studied it closely. "I'm not afraid of it—not at all. What's there to be afraid of?" And he laughed noisily as he handed it along.

"I had known for a number of years," said the colonel when the ornament had been returned to him, "that there was a legend concerning just such a bracelet, but I had never dreamt of seeing that bracelet itself, much less of owning it. You can readily imagine how keen my delight is. And now for the legend itself:

"Some forty odd centuries ago the powerful king of upper Egypt took to himself as wife a princess from a neighboring kingdom. During the week that preceded the wedding the capital resounded to shouts and laughter of revelling throngs. Guests, coming not only from the far corners of Egypt but also from lands more remote, flocked through the palace corridors; feasts and games on a scale never before known continued throughout day and night; countless minstrels and poets sang of the matchless beauty of the fair princess; while in the guarded treasure room lay heaped gifts of surpassing richness.

"Then, in a twinkling, all was changed. The brazen-voiced war trumpet supplanted the wedding lute. No sooner was the marriage ceremony concluded than messengers arrived in hot haste, bringing news that the savage and warlike tribes lying many days up the Nile, to the south, had again broken into rebellion.

"The king was furious. To be torn from the arms of his bride of but a moment drove him into frenzy. He ordered that the bearers of ill tidings be put to death. But he was too well-trained a soldier to overlook the value of time. Leaving the capital in control of a trusted young lieutenant, he set forth with a huge army before sundown of that day, determined to exact a terrible reparation.

"The enemy, however, was better prepared than he had thought; the warfare was long and sanguinary. Not until several desperate months had passed was he able to sit before his tent and look upon the ghastly heads of the last of the rebellious chiefs. Then, for the first time, did he count the days that separated him from his capital and his bride.

"He was lost in pleasant revery when two guards appeared, dragging between them an abject creature that begged for mercy at every step.

"'Sire,' said one of the guards, 'we found this man hiding in a well. He claims to be the soothsayer of the enemy.'

"The king had been rudely brought back to the present. 'Behead him,' he commanded.

"The soothsayer fell upon his knees.

" 'Mercy!' he cried. 'Have mercy, oh most puissant monarch! You who are acclaimed the most powerful and wise of all mankind; who at a word can make bend the necks of the most haughty; whose smile causes the universe to smile in return. Have mercy and hear my story.'

"The king was touched, flattered, by the man's words.

" 'Tell it briefly,' he said.

" 'He grants me mercy!' cried the soothsayer. 'I was against this war from the beginning, and thereby incurred the enmity of all. For months I have been forced to flee not only from your army but from that of the rebels as well.' He paused and critically scanned the king's face. 'We had news that you were betrothed to the most perfect of all women.'

"The king frowned and gripped the hilt of his sword.

" 'Hear me to the end,' begged the soothsayer. 'Knowing that if I sent a gift it must be both rare and beautiful, I scoured the upper country in patient search. I had barely succeeded in finding what I sought when the plotting of the chiefs drove me into hiding; the privilege of journeying to your capital and presenting it to you on your wedding day was denied me. But in all the perilous days that followed I did not allow it beyond my reach.'

"He fumbled in his tunic and brought forth a bracelet of bronze, mounted on which was a turquoise cobra in the act of striking.

" 'Sire,' he resumed, 'the man from whom I obtained this was very old, and learned, yet so long ago was this bracelet fashioned that he knew not its age; but he told me the charm that it possessed. Whosoever places this bracelet on the wrist of his wife places thereupon not only a bracelet but a watch-dog as well. For if the wife has been unfaithful, or becomes unfaithful in the future, this striking cobra will plunge its fangs into her arm and kill her!'

"The king leaped from the divan, snatched his sword from its scabbard and whirled it high above the head of the kneeling soothsayer.

" 'Wretch!' he cried. 'Dare you hint with the slightest breath that this bracelet should be put on the arm of my bride?'

"The sword, however did not descend. It wavered; then was slowly lowered. The king's brow darkened. Jealousy and suspicion had entered his soul.

" 'Take this man,' he ordered, 'and see that he is conducted back to our capital with the army. If you lose sight of him for an instant your lives are forfeit. Place that bracelet here before me.'

"The soothsayer was led away. The camp buzzed and hummed in preparation for the morrow's homeward march. Afternoon became evening; evening, night. Still the king sat on the divan, staring at the turquoise serpent with its bared fangs; and his hands shook, and his lips twitched, and his eyes became narrow and glowing . . .

"When day broke the king was far on his return journey. In the dead of night he had risen—a tense, smoldering fury of a man—had called for his swiftest charger, ordered his bodyguard about him, turned over the command of the army to another, and departed in furious haste. Inured to a life in the saddle as the bodyguard was, it had never been forced to keep such a pace as the king set. Day after day he sped northward toward his capital, stopping only to change mounts or to snatch a few hours of sleep, growing more gaunt of cheek, more flaming of eye, urging the bodyguard on, on, on. And always, from where it lay in the folds of his sash, the turquoise cobra mounted on the bronze bracelet seemed to whisper, 'Speed, more speed.'

"A guard on the wall at the southern gate of the capital, dozing on his spear in the small hours of the night, was suddenly awakened by the thunder of hoofs and loud voices demanding entrance. The man, brushing sleep from his eyes, peered over the edge of the wall and descried a score of horsemen beside the gate. He was about to raise the alarm that the enemy was upon the city, so wild and fierce was the clamor, when a voice,

rising above the others, clove him like a sword.

"'Open! Open! It is I, the king.'

"The guard all but fell to the ground in his haste to respond. 'Sire, sire,' he babbled as he swung open the gates, 'had I but known——'

"'Stand aside!' cried the king. 'Fool, out of my way!' And he cut at the man with his whip as he dashed by.

"KING and bodyguard swept through the dark and narrow streets without drawing rein; arrived at the palace, the king flung himself from the saddle and dashed up the steps. Once inside the royal building and his manner underwent swift and subtle change. The queen would be loth to accept so sinister-looking a gift as the bracelet from one who came with all the bearing of a madman; even less willing to put it on. His noisy sandals took on a decorous quiet; a smile grew into being on his lips; the fierce glow in his eyes died out. His manner became that of a weary, travel-worn man cheered by the thought of greeting the wife of his heart.

"So he came to the outer doorway of the queen's bedchamber. The guard, lying across the threshold, sprang up to prevent his entrance.

"'Deny me entrance?' demanded the king in a low voice, thrusting his face close to that of the guard.

"The man recoiled as though blasted by lightning, and prostrated himself upon the floor.

"The king entered the bedchamber. At the same moment the curtains that hung across the opposite doorway were drawn aside, and the queen entered the room. In the instant before their eyes met, the king felt surge within him all his one-time love for this, his wife, his bride. Never had she looked more beautiful. Then their eyes met, and love became hate.

"The queen's face went chalk-white. She swayed, clutched at the curtain for support, staring the while at him as though he were risen from the dead. Twice she strove to speak, and failed.

"In that age-long instant the king felt suspicion leap into conviction. Now he knew, and his smile burst into a laugh.

"The queen recovered herself with a mighty effort.

"'My lord! My lord!' She uttered a glad cry and flung herself into his arms. 'You live . . . you are alive! You are not come from the dead! Your pallor—your sunken cheeks—the hour—your sudden appearance—can you wonder that I all but swooned? But speak! You are travel-stained—you have ridden far and hard. The army—have you been defeated?'

"The king drew her the tighter to him, while his laughter grew.

"'The army is safe. It is you who are in danger.'

"The queen again turned deathly pale. 'I—I do not understand,' she faltered.

"The king released her, fumbled in his belt with hands that he could not wholly keep from shaking, and drew forth the bracelet. At the sight of it the queen stepped back, a great fear in her eyes.

"'Afraid?' said the king, a smile on his lips and death in his heart. 'Afraid of a stone serpent? Afraid of that which I have brought so many miles? Of that which will protect your life?'

"'Protect my life?' repeated the queen. 'Protect——'

"'Hark you,' adjured the king. 'The night after our last great battle with the enemy I dreamed a dream: Death hovered over you and would not go away. Straightway when I awoke I hastened to a soothsayer; a

man as wise as the hills. "Take you this bracelet," said he, giving me that which I now hold here, "and speed to your queen's side. Let not time, nor distance, nor fatigue halt you in your going. Do you but place it on her wrist and all mortal ills will be as not. Harm will never come her way." I sped—day and night have I sped. I am here.'

"The king held out the bracelet. The queen hesitated, and the king laughed.

" 'Can it be,' he asked, 'that you fear your husband?' He held his head to one side, making the pretense of listening. 'Hark! Was that a footstep?'

"The queen stifled a cry. 'No, no! Impossible! . . . You are dreaming! Give me the bracelet.'

" 'It is for me to put it on your wrist,' said the king.

"He snapped it on her arm, and all his suppressed passion boiled into life. His staring eyes, riveted on the bracelet, glowed like coals of fire. His breath came in great gusts; his body shook as with an ague. The queen, who had turned as though to listen while the king bent over her, cried aloud as she turned back and caught sight of his demoniacal face. She reached for the bracelet. As she did so a tremor ran through her body.

" 'The fangs! The fangs!' she shrieked, and strove to tear the bracelet free; but even as her fingers touched it they stiffened. She swayed, fell to the floor, and lay still.

"For a long time the king stood regarding the body. At length he stooped, raised the limp, bracelet-encircled arm, and scrutinized it. Set close together on the smooth skin were two tiny, dark blue punctures. Of a sudden he dropped the arm and listened. He rose to his feet with catlike swiftness, stepped to the curtain, cautiously lifted it aside and looked out. The lieutenant to whom he had entrusted the capital was stealthily approaching, a smile of expectation on his face.

"The king whipped his sword from its scabbard, stepped noiselessly to one side of the curtain, and waited."

RADBOURNE was the first to speak at the conclusion of the legend. He rang his half-filled glass on the table, spilling its contents over the cloth, and shouted, "Tha's some story! Say, tha's some story!" Then his voice was supplemented by a dozen others, and high-pitched comment went up and down and back and forth across the table. Mrs. Radbourne alone remained silent. She did not even attempt to check Radbourne's outburst, but sat staring at the cloth.

Someone asked to see the bracelet again.

"Oh," exclaimed the young widow Grayson, "I don't see how you dare touch it. I wouldn't handle it for anything!"

Radbourne burst into a guffaw, and thrust his wine-flushed face close to the widow's.

"You're not afraid of it, are you? You're not—not"—he snickered—"not afraid of a stone serpent?" He thumped his glass and gave way to unsuppressed shouts of mirth.

"Say," he said, suddenly checking himself, "how'd you like to have it put on your arm?"

The widow started. Radbourne, seeing her confusion, pushed his advantage home.

"Have it snapped on your arm all suddenlike, you know. Have somebody come up and say, 'Hold out your arm!' Or slip up behind you and——"

"Keep still!" cried the widow, half hysterically. "Don't talk about it any more!"

The colonel's voice was heard again. He was keenly pleased with the success of the legend.

"Come, come, let's all go into the collection room. There's a certain scarab, and a mummified cat that I had the devil's own time getting from a one-eyed thief of a fellow in Assiut, and a dozen other antiques; all of them have histories. Shall we go?"

There was a general pushing back of chairs and rising from the table. Radbourne rose with the others, but did not immediately leave the room. Although he continued to smile, a new look had come into his face; one of eagerness and cunning; a look that grew as he glanced from the widow Grayson to where the man Adams was replacing the bracelet in its box, and then back at the widow again. As Adams left the room in the wake of the guests to replace the bracelet box in the study for Colonel Chase, Radbourne hastened to the doorway and peered out. A moment later he was tiptoeing back in the direction that Adams had taken . . .

The colonel on entering the collection room stepped to one of the glass cases set against the wall, and took from it a tray filled with scarabs.

"Now, the scarab that I want to tell you about," he said to the guests as they encircled him, "is a rare one. I——" He ran his finger up and down the rows of beetles. "I——h'm, that's strange, where can that have disappeared to? Thought it was right here where I could put my finger on it . . . Wait a minute. What an old dullard I'm getting to be! It's in the annex—my extra collection room—I took it in there this morning to examine it. I'll be right back."

The colonel reached the annex and was in the act of picking up the scarab when a scream came from the room he had just left; a cry so piercing, so intense, so downright horrible that he dropped the little stone beetle and leaped back like one evading a knife thrust.

A second cry followed. "The fangs! The fangs!" wailed a voice, and a body fell to the floor.

Back to the collection room raced the colonel. A white-gowned woman lay at full length in front of one of the cases. Radbourne, his face distorted almost beyond recognition, knelt beside her. He was shouting and clamoring as though suddenly demented. Two of the other men were bending over Radbourne; one of them—the florid-faced man who had told the East Indian experience—clutched him by the shoulder. The rest of the party stood as if fixed to the floor, white-faced, horror-stricken.

Radbourne shook himself free. He bent lower, clasped his hands together, unclasped them, beat them against his head.

"Jane!" he cried. "Jane! I didn't mean it for you! No—not for you! Jane!"

The florid-faced man pulled Radbourne to his feet. The colonel now saw that the prostrate figure was that of Mrs. Radbourne. On her left wrist was the bronze bracelet with the turquoise cobra.

"The fool!" shouted the colonel, and darted to the florid-faced man's side. "That's right, Abercrombie, get the driveling idiot away. Adams! Quick, run for Dr. Jameson next door. Now some of you help me carry her over to the couch. Lower her head . . . that's it, and put a pillow under her feet. Now a little whisky. There, she'll come to in a minute."

Colonel Chase turned to Radbourne, who had been thrust into a chair. "Radbourne, what the devil did you do a thing like that for? Thought it would be smart to scare her, eh?"

Radbourne strove to rise from the chair, but the florid man restrained him.

"I tell you I didn't mean it for my wife!" he cried. "I meant it for Mrs. Grayson. I wanted to put it on her arm, just for fun. I—she was standing with her back to me. I thought it was Mrs. Grayson—they both had on the same kind of gown. I put it on the arm—she gave one look, and oh——"

Hurrying feet sounded. An elderly man in bath-robe and slippers, and carrying a medical case, hastened into the room, closely followed by the man Adams.

"Jameson!" said the colonel. "Over here, on the couch."

"Mrs. Radbourne?" exclaimed the doctor. "Bless me! I heard the screams while reading in bed—who in the neighborhood didn't hear them? I was half-way over here before I met your man."

Colonel Chase swiftly narrated the events of the evening as Dr. Jameson worked over Mrs. Radbourne. The guests added a word here and there.

The florid man came to the colonel and spoke in an aside. "Just as she fell she cried out something about fangs. Do you think—could it be possible——?"

The colonel read the rest of the question in the speaker's eyes.

"No, no!" he snapped out; then found himself brushing cold sweat from his forehead. He shuddered.

Dr. Jameson turned from the couch and straightened himself. Something in his manner caused those grouped about him to grow tense. The room became heavy with dread silence. He started to speak, but the colonel cut in ahead of him.

"You don't mean"—the colonel fought for articulation—"you can't mean——"

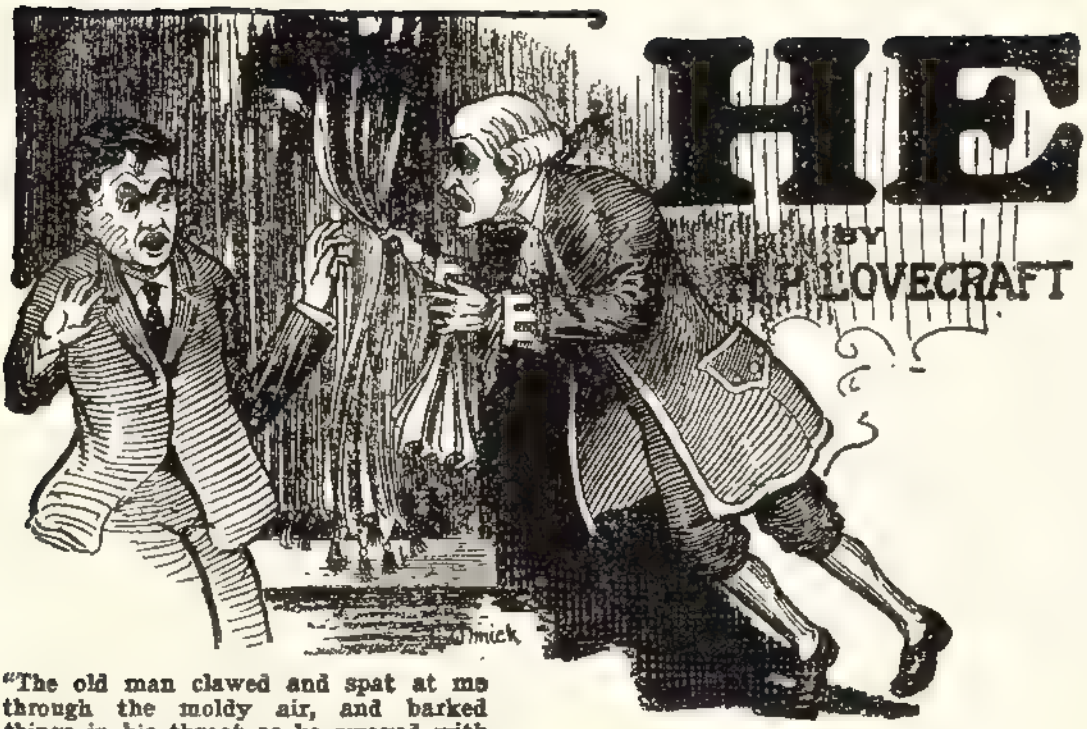
"I can get no response," said the doctor.

Radbourne's face went gray-white. He crumpled to the floor like a twisted paper napkin. One of the women swayed into a chair and began to sob.

The florid-faced man touched the colonel on the arm. He pointed. The colonel saw that the bracelet still encircled Mrs. Radbourne's left wrist. In the excitement and confusion of the moment no one had thought of removing it.

Both men spoke their thoughts with their eyes. They stepped to the couch, and while one raised the shapely arm, the other drew the bracelet free. They bent down and closely, searchingly, examined the wrist and forearm. At length they raised their heads and exchanged glances. No longer were horror and unnamed fear in their eyes; into them had come something, indescribable as yet, but swiftly growing.

There were no fang marks on that shapely white arm; no marks of any kind. Yet Mrs. Radbourne was dead.



"The old man clawed and spat at me through the moldy air, and barked things in his throat as he swayed with the yellow curtain he clutched."

I SAW him on a sleepless night when I was walking desperately to save my soul and my vision. My coming to New York had been a mistake; for whereas I had looked for poignant wonder and inspiration in the teeming labyrinths of ancient streets that twist endlessly from forgotten courts and squares and waterfronts to courts and squares and water-fronts equally forgotten, and in the Cyclopean modern towers and pinnacles that rise blackly Babylonian under waning moons, I had found instead only a sense of horror and oppression which threatened to master, paralyze, and annihilate me.

The disillusion had been gradual. Coming for the first time upon the town, I had seen it in the sunset from a bridge, majestic above its waters, its incredible peaks and pyramids rising flowerlike and delicate from pools of violet mist to play with the flaming golden clouds and the first stars of evening. Then it had lighted up window by window above the shimmering tides where lanterns nodded and glided and deep horns bayed weird harmonies, and had itself become a starry firmament of dream, redolent of faery music, and one with the marvels of Carcassonne and Samarcand and El Dorado and all glorious and half-fabulous cities. Shortly afterward I was taken through those antique ways so dear to my fancy—narrow, curving alleys and passages where rows of red Georgian brick blinked with small-paned dormers above pillared doorways that had looked on gilded sedans and paneled coaches—and in the first flush of realization of these long-wished things I thought I had indeed achieved such treasures as would make me in time a poet.

But success and happiness were not to be. Garish daylight showed only squalor and alienage and the noxious elephantiasis of climbing, spreading stone where the moon had hinted of

loveliness and elder magic; and the throngs of people that seethed through the flumelike streets were squat, swarthy strangers with hardened faces and narrow eyes, shrewd strangers without dreams and without kinship to the scenes about them, who could never mean aught to a blue-eyed man of the old folk, with the love of fair green lanes and white New England village steeples in his heart.

So instead of the poems I had hoped for, there came only a shuddering blankness and ineffable loneliness; and I saw at last a fearful truth which no one had ever dared to breathe before—the unwhisperable secret of secrets—the fact that this city of stone and stridor is not a sentient perpetuation of Old New York as London is of Old London and Paris of Old Paris, but that it is in fact quite dead, its sprawling body imperfectly embalmed and infested with queer animate things which have nothing to do with it as it was in life. Upon making this discovery I ceased to sleep comfortably; though something of resigned tranquillity came back as I gradually formed the habit of keeping off the streets by day and venturing abroad only at night, when darkness calls forth what little of the past still hovers wraithlike about, and old white doorways remember the stalwart forms that once passed through them. With this mode of relief I even wrote a few poems, and still refrained from going home to my people lest I seem to crawl back ignobly in defeat.

Then, on a sleepless night's walk, I met the man. It was in a grotesque hidden courtyard of the Greenwich section, for there in my ignorance I had settled, having heard of the place as the natural home of poets and artists. The archaic lanes and houses and unexpected bits of square and court had indeed delighted me, and when I found the poets and artists to be loud-voiced pretenders whose quaintness is tinsel and whose lives are a denial of all that pure beauty which is poetry and art, I stayed on for love of these venerable things. I fancied them as they were in their prime, when Greenwich was a placid village not yet engulfed by the town; and in the hours before dawn, when all the revellers had slunk away, I used to wander alone among their cryptical windings and brood upon the curious arcana which generations must have deposited there. This kept my soul alive, and gave me a few of those dreams and visions for which the poet far within me cried out.

The man came upon me at about 2 one cloudy August morning, as I was threading a series of detached courtyards; now accessible only through the unlighted hallways of intervening buildings, but once forming parts of a continuous network of picturesque alleys. I had heard of them by vague rumor, and realized that they could not be upon any map of today; but the fact that they were forgotten only endeared them to me, so that I had sought them with twice my usual eagerness. Now that I had found them, my eagerness was again redoubled; for something in their arrangement dimly hinted that they might be only a few of many such, with dark, dumb counterparts wedged obscurely betwixt high blank walls and deserted rear tenements, or lurking lamplessly behind archways, unbetrayed by hordes of the foreign-speaking or guarded by furtive and uncommunicative artists whose practises do not invite publicity or the light of day.

He spoke to me without invitation, noting my mood and glances as I studied certain knockered doorways above iron-railed steps, the pallid glow of traceried transoms feebly lighting my face. His own face was in shadow, and he wore a wide-brimmed hat which somehow blended perfectly with the out-of-date cloak

he affected; but I was subtly disquieted even before he addressed me. His form was very slight, thin almost to cadaverousness; and his voice proved phenomenally soft and hollow, though not particularly deep. He had, he said, noticed me several times at my wanderings; and inferred that I resembled him in loving the vestiges of former years. Would I not like the guidance of one long practised in these explorations, and possessed of local information profoundly deeper than any which an obvious newcomer could possibly have gained?

As he spoke, I caught a glimpse of his face in the yellow beam from a solitary attic window. It was a noble, even a handsome, elderly countenance; and bore the marks of a lineage and refinement unusual for the age and place. Yet some quality about it disturbed me almost as much as its features pleased me—perhaps it was too white, or too expressionless, or too much out of keeping with the locality, to make me feel easy or comfortable. Nevertheless I followed him; for in those dreary days my quest for antique beauty and mystery was all that I had to keep my soul alive, and I reckoned it a rare favor of Fate to fall in with one whose kindred seekings seemed to have penetrated so much farther than mine.

Something in the night constrained the cloaked man to silence, and for a long hour he led me forward without needless words; making only the briefest of comments concerning ancient names and dates and changes, and directing my progress very largely by gestures as we squeezed through interstices, tiptoed through corridors, clambered over brick walls, and once crawled on hands and knees through a low, arched passage of stone whose immense length and tortuous twistings effaced at last every hint of geographical location I had managed to preserve. The things we saw were very old and marvelous, or at least they seemed so in the few straggling rays of light by which I viewed them, and I shall never forget the tottering Ionic columns and fluted pilasters and urn-headed iron fence-posts and flaring-linteled windows and decorative fanlights that appeared to grow quainter and stranger the deeper we advanced into this inexhaustible maze of unknown antiquity.

We met no person, and as time passed the lighted windows became fewer and fewer. The street-lights we first encountered had been of oil, and of the ancient lozenge pattern. Later I noticed some with candles; and at last, after traversing a horrible unlighted court where my guide had to lead me with his gloved hand through total blackness to a narrow wooden gate in a high wall, we came upon a fragment of alley lit only by lanterns in front of every seventh house—unbelievably Colonial tin lanterns with conical tops and holes punched in the sides. This alley led steeply uphill—more steeply than I had thought possible in this part of New York—and the upper end was blocked squarely by the ivy-clad wall of a private estate, beyond which I could see a pale cupola, and the tops of trees waving against a vague lightness in the sky. In this wall was a small, low-arched gate of nail-studded black oak, which the man proceeded to unlock with a ponderous key. Leading me within, he steered a course in utter blackness over what seemed to be a gravel path, and finally up a flight of stone steps to the door of the house, which he unlocked and opened for me.

We entered, and as we did so I grew faint from a reek of infinite mustiness which welled out to meet us, and which must have been the fruit of unwholesome centuries of decay. My host appeared not to notice this, and in courtesy I kept silent as

he piloted me up a curving stairway, across a hall, and into a room whose door I heard him lock behind us. Then I saw him pull the curtains of the three small-paned windows that barely showed themselves against the lightening sky; after which he crossed to the mantel, struck flint and steel, lighted two candles of a candelabrum of twelve sconces, and made a gesture enjoining soft-toned speech.

In this feeble radiance I saw that we were in a spacious, well-furnished and paneled library dating from the first quarter of the Eighteenth Century, with splendid doorway pediments, a delightful Doric cornice, and a magnificently carved overmantel with scroll-and-urn top. Above the crowded bookshelves at intervals along the walls were well-wrought family portraits; all tarnished to an enigmatical dimness, and bearing an unmistakable likeness to the man who now motioned me to a chair beside the graceful Chippendale table. Before seating himself across the table from me, my host paused for a moment as if in embarrassment; then, tardily removing his gloves, wide-brimmed hat, and cloak, stood theatrically revealed in full mid-Georgian costume from queued hair and neck ruffles to knee-breeches, silk hose, and the buckled shoes I had not previously noticed. Now slowly sinking into a lyre-back chair, he commenced to eye me intently.

Without his hat he took on an aspect of extreme age which was scarcely visible before, and I wondered if this unperceived mark of singular longevity were not one of the sources of my original disquiet. When he spoke at length, his soft, hollow, and carefully muffled voice not infrequently quavered; and now and then I had great difficulty in following him as I listened with a thrill of amazement and half-disavowed alarm which grew each instant.

"You behold, Sir," my host began, "a man of very eccentrical habits, for whose costume no apology need be offered to one with your wit and inclinations. Reflecting upon better times, I have not scrupled to ascertain their ways and adopt their dress and manners; an indulgence which offends none if practised without ostentation. It hath been my good fortune to retain the rural seat of my ancestors, swallowed though it was by two towns, first Greenwich, which built up hither after 1800, then New York, which joined on near 1830. There were many reasons for the close keeping of this place in my family, and I have not been remiss in discharging such obligations. The squire who succeeded to it in 1768 studied sartain arts and made sartain discoveries, all connected with influences residing in this particular plot of ground, and eminently desarving of the strongest guarding. Some curious effects of these arts and discoveries I now purpose to show you, under the strictest secrecy; and I believe I may rely on my judgment of men enough to have no distrust of either your interest or your fidelity."

He paused, but I could only nod my head. I have said that I was alarmed, yet to my soul nothing was more deadly than the material daylight world of New York, and whether this man were a harmless eccentric or a wielder of dangerous arts I had no choice save to follow him and slake my sense of wonder on whatever he might have to offer. So I listened.

"To—my ancestor," he softly continued, "there appeared to reside some very remarkable qualities in the will of mankind; qualities having a little-suspected dominance not only over the acts of one's self and of others, but over every variety of force and substance in Nature, and over many elements and dimensions deemed more univarsal than Nature herself. May I say that

he flouted the sanctity of things as great as space and time and that he put to strange uses the rites of sartain half-breed red Indians once encamped upon this hill? These Indians showed choler when the place was built, and were plaguey pestilent in asking to visit the grounds at the full of the moon. For years they stole over the wall each month when they could, and by stealth performed sartain acts. Then, in '68, the new squire catched them at their doings, and stood still at what he saw. Thereafter he bargained with them and exchanged the free access of his grounds for the exact inwardness of what they did; larning that their grandfathers got part of their custom from red ancestors and part from an old Dutchman in the time of the States-General. And pox on him, I'm afeared the squire must have sarved them monstrous bad rum—whether or not by intent—for a week after he larnt the secret he was the only man living that knew it. You, Sir, are the first outsider to be told there is a secret, and split me if I'd have risked tampering that much with—the powers—had ye not been so hot after bygone things."

I shuddered as the man grew colloquial—and with the familiar speech of another day. He went on.

"But you must know, Sir, that what—the squire—got from those mongrel salvages was but a small part of the larning he came to have. He had not been at Oxford for nothing, nor talked to no account with an ancient chymist and astrologer in Paris. He was, in fine, made sensible that all the world is but the smoke of our intellects; past the bidding of the vulgar, but by the wise to be puffed out and drawn in like any cloud of prime Virginia tobacco. What we want, we may make about us; and what we don't want, we may sweep away. I won't say that all this is wholly true in body, but 'tis sufficient true to furnish a very pretty spectacle now and then. You, I conceive, would be tickled by a better sight of sartain other years than your fancy affords you; so be pleased to hold back any fright at what I design to show. Come to the window and be quiet."

My host now took my hand to draw me to one of the two windows on the long side of the malodorous room, and at the first touch of his ungloved fingers I turned cold. His flesh, though dry and firm, was of the quality of ice; and I almost shrank away from his pulling. But again I thought of the emptiness and horror of reality, and boldly prepared to follow whithersoever I might be led. Once at the window, the man drew apart the yellow silk curtains and directed my stare into the blackness outside. For a moment I saw nothing save a myriad of tiny dancing lights, far, far before me. Then, as if in response to an insidious motion of my host's hand, a flash of heat-lightning played over the scene, and I looked out upon a sea of luxuriant foliage—foliage unpolluted, and not the sea of roofs to be expected by any normal mind. On my right the Hudson glittered wickedly, and in the distance ahead I saw the unhealthy shimmer of a vast salt marsh constellated with nervous fireflies. The flash died, and an evil smile illumined the waxy face of the aged necromancer.

"That was before my time—before the new squire's time. Pray let us try again."

I was faint, even fainter than the hateful modernity of that accursed city had made me.

"Good God!" I whispered; "can you do that for *any time?*" And as he nodded, and bared the black stumps of what had once been yellow fangs, I clutched at the curtains to prevent myself from falling. But he steadied me with that terrible, ice-

cold claw, and once more made his insidious gesture.

Again the lightning flashed—but this time upon a scene not wholly strange. It was Greenwich, the Greenwich that used to be, with here and there a roof or row of houses as we see it now, yet with lovely green lanes and fields and bits of grassy common. The marsh still glittered beyond, but in the farther distance I saw the steeples of what was then all of New York; Trinity and St. Paul's and the Brick Church dominating their sisters, and a faint haze of wood smoke hovering over the whole. I breathed hard, but not so much from the sight itself as from the possibilities my imagination terrifiedly conjured up.

"Can you—dare you—go *far?*" I spoke with awe, and I think he shared it for a second, but the evil grin returned.

"*Far?* What I have seen would blast ye to a mad statue of stone! Back, back—forward, *forward*—look, ye puling lack-wit!"

And as he snarled the phrase under his breath he gestured anew; bringing to the sky a flash more blinding than either which had come before. For full three seconds I could glimpse that pandemoniac sight, and in those seconds I saw a vista which will ever afterward torment me in dreams. I saw the heavens verminous with strange flying things, and beneath them a hellish black city of giant stone terraces with impious pyramids flung savagely to the moon, and devil-lights burning from unnumbered windows. And swarming loathsomely on aerial galleries I saw the yellow, squint-eyed people of that city, robed horribly in orange and red, and dancing insanely to the pounding of fevered kettle-drums, the clatter of obscene crotala, and the maniacal moaning of muted horns whose ceaseless dirges rose and fell undulantly like the waves of an unhallowed ocean of bitumen.

I saw this vista, I say, and heard as with the mind's ear the blasphemous domdaniel of cacophony which companioned it. It was the shrieking fulfilment of all the horror which that corpse-city had ever stirred in my soul, and forgetting every injunction to silence I screamed and screamed and screamed as my nerves gave way and the walls quivered about me.

Then, as the flash subsided, I saw that my host was trembling too; a look of shocking fear half-blotting from his face the serpent distortion of rage which my screams had excited. He tottered, clutched at the curtains as I had done before, and wriggled his head wildly, like a hunted animal. God knows he had cause, for as the echoes of my screaming died away there came another sound so hellishly suggestive that only numbed emotion kept me sane and conscious. It was the steady, stealthy creaking of the stairs beyond the locked door, as with the ascent of a barefoot or skin-shod horde; and at last the cautious, purposeful rattling of the brass latch that glowed in the feeble candlelight. The old man clawed and spat at me through the moldy air, and barked things in his throat as he swayed with the yellow curtain he clutched.

"The full moon—damn ye—ye . . . ye yelping dog—ye called 'em, and they've come for me! Moccasined feet—dead men—Gad sink ye, ye red devils, but I poisoned no rum o' yours—han't I kept your pox-rotted magic safe?—ye swilled yourselves sick, curse ye, and ye must needs blame the squire—let go, you! Unhand that latch—I've naught for ye here——"

At this point three slow and very deliberate raps shook the panels of the door, and a white foam gathered at the mouth of the frantic magician. His fright, turning to steely despair,

left room for a resurgence of his rage against me; and he staggered a step toward the table on whose edge I was steadying myself. The curtains, still clutched in his right hand as his left clawed out at me, grew taut and finally crashed down from their lofty fastenings; admitting to the room a flood of that full moonlight which the brightening of the sky had presaged. In those greenish beams the candles paled, and a new semblance of decay spread over the must-reeking room with its wormy paneling, sagging floor, battered mantel, rickety furniture, and ragged draperies. It spread over the old man, too, whether from the same source or because of his fear and vehemence, and I saw him shrivel and blacken as he lurched near and strove to rend me with vulturine talons. Only his eyes stayed whole, and they glared with a propulsive, dilated incandescence which grew as the face around them charred and dwindled.

The rapping was now repeated with greater insistence, and this time bore a hint of metal. The black thing facing me had become only a head with eyes, impotently trying to wriggle across the sinking floor in my direction, and occasionally emitting feeble little spits of immortal malice. Now swift and splintering blows assailed the sickly panels, and I saw the gleam of a tomahawk as it cleft the rending wood. I did not move, for I could not; but watched dazedly as the door fell in pieces to admit a colossal, shapeless influx of inky substance starred with shining, malevolent eyes. It poured thickly, like a flood of oil bursting a rotten bulkhead, overturned a chair as it spread, and finally flowed under the table and across the room to where the blackened head with the eyes still glared at me. Around that head it closed, totally swallowing it up, and in another moment it had begun to recede; bearing away its invisible burden without touching me, and flowing again out of that black doorway and down the unseen stairs, which creaked as before, though in reverse order.

Then the floor gave way at last, and I slid gaspingly down into the nighted chamber below, choking with cobwebs and half-swooning with terror. The green moon, shining through broken windows, showed me the hall door half open; and as I rose from the plaster-strown floor and twisted myself free from the sagged ceiling, I saw sweep past it an awful torrent of blackness, with scores of baleful eyes glowing in it. It was seeking the door to the cellar, and when it found it, it vanished therein. I now felt the floor of this lower room giving as that of the upper chamber had done, and once a crashing above had been followed by the fall past the west window of something which must have been the cupola. Now liberated for the instant from the wreckage, I rushed through the hall to the front door; and finding myself unable to open it, seized a chair and broke a window, climbing frenziedly out upon the unkempt lawn where moonlight danced over yard-high grass and weeds. The wall was high, and all the gates were locked; but moving a pile of boxes in a corner I managed to gain the top and cling to the great stone urn set there.

About me in my exhaustion I could see only strange walls and windows and old gambrel roofs. The steep street of my approach was nowhere visible, and the little I did see succumbed rapidly to a mist that rolled in from the river despite the glaring moonlight. Suddenly the urn to which I clung began to tremble, as if sharing my own lethal dizziness; and in another instant my body was plunging downward to I knew not what fate.

The man who found me said that I must have crawled a long way despite my broken bones, for a trail of

blood stretched off as far as he dared look. The gathering rain soon effaced this link with the scene of my ordeal, and reports could state no more than that I had appeared from a place unknown, at the entrance of a little black court off Perry Street.

I never sought to return to those tenebrous labyrinths, nor would I direct any sane man thither if I could. Of who or what that ancient creature was, I have no idea; but I repeat that the city is dead and full of unsuspected horrors. Whither *he* has gone, I do not know; but I have gone home to the pure New England lanes up which fragrant sea-winds sweep at evening.

A Grim Story of the End of the World Came Over the Wire in the Quiet Hours

THE NIGHT WIRE

By H. F. ARNOLD

"NEW YORK, September 30
CP FLASH
"Ambassador Holliwell died here today. The end came suddenly as the ambassador was alone in his study. . . ."

There's something ungodly about these night wire jobs. You sit up here on the top floor of a skyscraper and listen in to the whispers of a civilization. New York, London, Calcutta, Bombay, Singapore — they're your next-door neighbors after the street lights go dim and the world has gone to sleep.

Along in the quiet hours between 2 and 4, the receiving operators doze over their sounders and the news comes in. Fires and disasters and suicides. Murders, crowds, catastrophes. Sometimes an earthquake with a casualty list as long as your arm. The night wire man takes it down almost in his sleep, picking it off on his typewriter with one finger.

Once in a long time you prick up your ears and listen. You've heard of someone you knew in Singapore, Halifax or Paris, long ago. Maybe they've been promoted, but more probably they've been murdered or drowned. Perhaps they just decided to quit and took some bizarre way out. Made it interesting enough to get in the news.

But that doesn't happen often. Most of the time you sit and doze and tap, tap on your typewriter and wish you were home in bed.

Sometimes, though, queer things happen. One did the other night and I haven't got over it yet. I wish I could.

You see, I handle the night manager's desk in a western seaport town; what the name is, doesn't matter.

There is, or rather was, only one night operator on my staff, a fellow named John Morgan, about forty years of age, I should say, and a sober, hard-working sort.

He was one of the best operators I ever knew, what is known as a "double" man. That means he could handle two instruments at once and type the stories on different typewriters at the same time. He was one of the three men I ever knew who could

do it consistently, hour after hour, and never make a mistake.

Generally we used only one wire at night, but sometimes, when it was late and the news was coming fast, the Chicago and Denver stations would open a second wire and then Morgan would do his stuff. He was a wizard, a mechanical automatic wizard which functioned marvelously but was without imagination.

On the night of the sixteenth he complained of feeling tired. It was the first and last time I had ever heard him say a word about himself, and I had known him for three years.

It was at just 3 o'clock and we were running only one wire. I was nodding over reports at my desk and not paying much attention to him when he spoke.

"Jim," he said, "does it feel close in here to you?"

"Why, no, John," I answered, "but I'll open a window if you like."

"Never mind," he said, "I reckon I'm just a little tired."

That was all that was said and I went on working. Every ten minutes or so I would walk over and take a pile of copy that had stacked up neatly beside his typewriter as the messages were printed out in triplicate.

It must have been twenty minutes after he spoke that I noticed he had opened up the other wire and was using both typewriters. I thought it was a little unusual, as there was nothing very "hot" coming in. On my next trip I picked up the copy from both machines and took it back to my desk to sort out the duplicates.

The first wire was running out the usual sort of stuff and I just looked over it hurriedly. Then I turned to the second pile of copy. I remember it particularly because the story was from a town I had never heard of: "Xebico." Here is the dispatch. I saved a duplicate of it from our files:

"Xebico Sept. 16 CP BULLETIN

"The heaviest mist in the history of the city settled over the town at 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon. All traffic has stopped and the mist hangs like a pall over everything. Lights of ordinary intensity fail to pierce the fog, which is constantly growing heavier.

"Scientists here are unable to agree as to the cause, and the local weather bureau states that the like has never occurred before in the history of the city.

"At 7 p. m. last night municipal authorities——

(more)"

That was all there was. Nothing out of the ordinary at a bureau headquarters, but, as I say, I noticed the story because of the name of the town.

It must have been fifteen minutes later that I went over for another batch of copy. Morgan was slumped down in his chair and had switched his green electric light shade so that the gleam missed his eyes and hit only the top of the two typewriters.

Only the usual stuff was in the right hand pile, but the left hand batch carried another story from "Xebico." All press dispatches come in "takes", meaning that parts of many different stories are strung along together, perhaps with but a few paragraphs of each coming through at a time. This second story was marked "add fog". Here is the copy:

"At 7 p. m. the fog had increased noticeably. All lights were now invisible and the town was shrouded in pitch darkness.

"As a peculiarity of the phenomenon, the fog is accompanied by a sickly odor, comparable to nothing yet experienced here."

Below that in customary press fashion was the hour, 3:27, and the initials of the operator, JM.

There was only one other story in

the pile from the second wire. Here it is:

"2nd add Xebico Fog

"Accounts as to the origin of the mist differ greatly. Among the most unusual is that of the sexton of the local church, who groped his way to headquarters in a hysterical condition and declared that the fog originated in the village churchyard.

" 'It was first visible in the shape of a soft gray blanket clinging to the earth above the graves,' he stated. 'Then it began to rise, higher and higher. A subterranean breeze seemed to blow it in billows, which split up and then joined together again.

" 'Fog phantoms, writhing in anguish, twisted the mist into queer forms and figures. And then—in the very thick midst of the mass—something moved.

" 'I turned and ran from the accursed spot. Behind me I heard screams coming from the houses bordering on the graveyard.'

"Although the sexton's story is generally discredited, a party has left to investigate. Immediately after telling his story, the sexton collapsed and is now in a local hospital, unconscious."

Queer story, wasn't it? Not that we aren't used to it, for a lot of unusual stories come in over the wire. But for some reason or other, perhaps because it was so quiet that night, the report of the fog made a great impression on me.

It was almost with dread that I went over to the waiting piles of copy. Morgan did not move and the only sound in the room was the tap-tap of the sounders. It was ominous, nerve-racking.

There was another story from Xebico in the pile of copy. I seized on it anxiously.

"New Lead Xebico Fog CP

"The rescue party which went out at 11 p. m. to investigate a weird story of the origin of a fog which, since late yesterday, has shrouded the city in darkness, has failed to return. Another and larger party has been dispatched.

"Meanwhile the fog has, if possible, grown heavier. It seeps through the cracks in the doors and fills the atmosphere with a terribly depressing odor of decay. It is oppressive, terrifying, bearing with it a subtle impression of things long dead.

"Residents of the city have left their homes and gathered in the local church, where the priests are holding services of prayer. The scene is beyond description. Grown folk and children are alike terrified and many are almost beside themselves with fear.

"Mid the wisps of vapor which partially veil the church auditorium, an old priest is praying for the welfare of his flock. The audience alternately wail and cross themselves.

"From the outskirts of the city may be heard cries of unknown voices. They echo through the fog in queer uncadenced minor keys. The sounds resemble nothing so much as wind whistling through a gigantic tunnel. But the night is calm and there is no wind. The second rescue party—(more)"

I AM a calm man and never in a dozen years spent with the wires have been known to become excited, but despite myself I rose from my chair and walked to the window.

Could I be mistaken, or far down in the canyons of the city beneath me did I see a faint trace of fog? Pshaw! It was all imagination.

In the pressroom the click of the sounders seemed to have raised the tempo of their tune. Morgan alone had not stirred from his chair. His head sunk between his shoulders, he tapped the dispatches out on the typewriters with one finger of each hand.

He looked asleep. Maybe he was—but no, endlessly, efficiently, the two

machines rattled off line after line, as relentless and effortless as death itself. There was something about the monotonous movement of the typewriter keys that fascinated me. I walked over and stood behind his chair reading over his shoulder the type as it came into being, word by word.

Ah, here was another:

"Flash Xebico CP

"There will be no more bulletins from this office. The impossible has happened. No messages have come into this room for twenty minutes. We are cut off from the outside and even the streets below us.

"I will stay with the wire until the end.

"It is the end, indeed. Since 4 p. m. yesterday the fog has hung over the city. Following reports from the sexton of the local church, two rescue parties were sent out to investigate conditions on the outskirts of the city. Neither party has ever returned nor was any word received from them. It is quite certain now that they will never return.

"From my instrument I can gaze down on the city beneath me. From the position of this room on the thirteenth floor, nearly the entire city can be seen. Now I can see only a thick blanket of blackness where customarily are lights and life.

"I fear greatly that the wailing cries heard constantly from the outskirts of the city are the death cries of the inhabitants. They are constantly increasing in volume and are approaching the center of the city.

"The fog yet hangs over everything. If possible, it is even heavier than before. But the conditions have changed. Instead of an opaque, impenetrable wall of odorous vapor, now swirls and writhes a shapeless mass in contortions of almost human agony. Now and again the mass parts and I catch a brief glimpse of the streets below.

"People are running to and fro, screaming in despair. A vast bedlam of sound flies up to my window, and above all is the immense whistling of unseen and unfelt winds.

"The fog has again swept over the city and the whistling is coming closer and closer.

"It is now directly beneath me.

"God! An instant ago the mist opened and I caught a glimpse of the streets below.

"The fog is not simply vapor—it lives. By the side of each moaning and weeping human is a companion figure, an aura of strange and varicolored hues. How the shapes cling! Each to a living thing!

"The men and women are down. Flat on their faces. The fog figures caress them lovingly. They are kneeling beside them. They are—but I dare not tell it.

"The prone and writhing bodies have been stripped of their clothing. They are being consumed—piecemeal.

"A merciful wall of hot, steamy vapor has swept over the whole scene. I can see no more.

"Beneath me the wall of vapor is changing colors. It seems to be lighted by internal fires. No, it isn't. I have made a mistake. The colors are from above, reflections from the sky.

"Look up! Look up! The whole sky is in flames. Colors as yet unseen by man or demon. The flames are moving, they have started to intermix, the colors rearrange themselves. They are so brilliant that my eyes burn, yet they are a long way off.

"Now they have begun to swirl, to circle in and out, twisting in intricate designs and patterns. The lights are racing each with each, a kaleidoscope of unearthly brilliance.

"I have made a discovery. There is nothing harmful in the lights. They radiate force and friendliness, almost cheeriness. But by their very strength, they hurt.

"As I look they are swinging closer and closer, a million miles at each jump. Millions of miles with the speed of light. Aye, it is light, the quintessence of all light. Beneath it the fog melts into a jeweled mist, radiant, rainbow-colored of a thousand varied spectrums.

"I can see the streets. Why, they are filled with people! The lights are coming closer. They are all around me. I am enveloped. I——"

The message stopped abruptly. The wire to Xebico was dead. Beneath my eyes in the narrow circle of light from under the green lampshade, the black printing no longer spun itself, letter by letter, across the page.

The room seemed filled with a solemn quiet, a silence vaguely impressive. Powerful.

I looked down at Morgan. His hands had dropped nervelessly at his sides while his body had hunched over peculiarly. I turned the lampshade back, throwing the light squarely in his face. His eyes were staring, fixed. Filled with a sudden foreboding, I stepped beside him and called Chicago on the wire. After a second the sounder clicked its answer.

Why? But there was something wrong. Chicago was reporting that Wire Two had not been used throughout the evening.

"Morgan!" I shouted. "Morgan! Wake up, it isn't true. Someone has been hoaxing us. Why——" In my eagerness I grasped him by the shoulder. It was only then that I understood.

The body was quite cold. Morgan had been dead for hours. Could it be that his sensitized brain and automatic fingers had continued to record impressions even after the end?

I shall never know, for I shall never again handle the night shift. Search in a world atlas discloses no town of Xebico. Whatever it was that killed John Morgan will forever remain a mystery.

ELYSIUM

By A. LESLIE

Ashes of sky-flame glowing,
  Thunder of tide on the bars,
Night, and a wild wind blowing
  A curse to the screaming stars.

You, with the salt spray clinging
  White in your dusky hair—
You and your wild heart singing
  Pæans to the black-green flare.

Flicker of foam a-skirling,
  Beat of the sudden rain,
Gashes of moonlight whirling
  Rents in the murky stain.

Faces bared to the lashing
  Sting of the wind-whipt brine;
Thrill of the white manes flashing,
  Throb of your heart to mine.

Death at the helm a-grinning,
  Night if the cold hand grips,
Life as the prize for winning—
  Life, and the flame of your lips.

Jumbee

by Henry S. Whitehead

"There they hung, though no ladder's rung
Supported their dangling feet."

MR. GRANVILLE LEE, a Virginian of Virginians, coming out of the World War with a lung wasted and scorched by mustard gas, was recommended by his physician to spend a winter in the spice-and-balm climate of the Lesser Antilles—the lower islands of the West Indian archipelago. He chose one of the American islands, St. Croix, the old Santa Cruz—Island of the Holy Cross—named by Columbus himself on his second voyage; once famous for its rum.

It was to Jaffray Da Silva that Mr. Lee at last turned for definite information about the local magic; information which, after a two-months' residence, accompanied with marked improvement in his general health, he had come to regard as imperative, from the whetting glimpses he had received of its persistence on the island.

Contact with local customs, too, had sufficiently blunted his inherited sensibilities, to make him almost comfortable, as he sat with Mr. Da Silva on the cool gallery of that gentleman's beautiful house, in the shade of forty years' growth of bougainvillea, on a certain afternoon. It was the restful gossipy period between 5 o'clock and dinnertime. A glass jug of foaming rum-swizzel stood on the table between them.

"But, tell me, Mr. Da Silva," he urged, as he absorbed his second glass of the cooling, mild drink, "have you ever, actually, been confronted with a 'Jumbee'?—ever really seen one? You say, quite frankly, that you believe in them!"

This was not the first question about Jumbees that Mr. Lee had asked. He had consulted planters; he had spoken of the matter of Jumbees with courteous, intelligent, colored storekeepers about the town, and even in Christiansted, St. Croix's other and larger town on the north side of the island. He had even mentioned the matter to one or two coal-black sugar-field laborers; for he had been on the island just long enough

to begin to understand—a little—the weird jargon of speech which Lafcadio Hearn, when he visited St. Croix many years before, had not recognized as "English!"

There had been marked differences in what he had been told. The planters and storekeepers had smiled, though with varying degrees of intensity, and had replied that the Danes had invented Jumbees, to keep their estate-laborers indoors after nightfall, thus ensuring a proper night's sleep for them, and minimizing the depredations upon growing crops. The laborers whom he had asked, had rolled their eyes somewhat, but, it being broad daylight at the time of the enquiries, they had broken their impassive gravity with smiles, and sought to impress Mr. Lee with their lofty contempt for the beliefs of their fellow blacks, and with queerly-phrased assurances that Jumbee is a figment of the imagination.

Nevertheless, Mr. Lee was not satisfied. There was something here that he seemed to be missing,—something extremely interesting, too, it appeared to him; something very different from "Bre'r Rabbit" and similar tales of his own remembered childhood in Virginia.

Once, too, he had been reading a book about Martinique and Guadeloupe, those ancient jewels of France's crown, and he had not read far before he met the word "Zombi." After that, he knew, at least, that the Danes had not "invented" the Jumbee. He heard, though vaguely, of the laborer's belief that Sven Garik, who had long ago gone back to his home in Sweden, and Garrity, one of the smaller planters now on the island, were "wolves!" Lycanthropy, animal-metamorphosis, it appeared, formed part of this strange texture of local belief.

Mr. Jaffray Da Silva was one-eighth African. He was, therefore, by island usage, "colored," which is as different from being "black" in the West Indies as anything that can be imagined. Mr. Da Silva had been educated in the continental European manner. In his every word and action, he reflected the faultless courtesy of his European forbears. By every right and custom of West Indian society, Mr. Da Silva was a colored gentleman, whose social status was as clear-cut and definite as a cameo.

These islands are largely populated by persons like Mr. Da Silva. Despite the difference in their status from what it would be in North America, in the islands it has its advantages,—among them that of logic. To the West Indian mind, a man whose heredity is seven-eighths derived from gentry, as like as not with authentic coats-of-arms, is entitled to be treated accordingly. That is why Mr. Da Silva's many clerks, and everybody else who knew him, treated him with deference, addressed him as "sir," and doffed their hats in continental fashion when meeting; salutes which, of course, Mr. Da Silva invariably returned, even to the humblest, which is one of the marks of a gentleman anywhere.

Jaffray da Silva shifted one thin leg, draped in spotless white drill, over the other, and lighted a fresh cigarette.

"Even my friends smile at me, Mr. Lee," he replied, with a tolerant smile, which lightened for an instant his melancholy, ivory-white countenance. "They laugh at me more or less because I admit I believe in Jumbees. It is possible that everybody with even a small amount of African blood possesses that streak of belief in magic and the like. I seem, though, to have a peculiar aptitude for it! It is a matter of *experience*, with me, sir, and my friends are free to smile at me if they wish. Most of them,—

well, they do not admit their beliefs as freely as I, perhaps!"

Mr. Lee took another sip of the cold swizzel. He had heard how difficult it was to get Jaffray Da Silva to speak of his "experiences," and he suspected that under his host's even courtesy lay that austere pride which resents anything like ridicule, despite that tolerant smile.

"Please proceed, sir," urged Mr. Lee, and was quite unconscious that he had just used a word which, in his native South, is reserved for gentlemen of pure Caucasian blood.

"When I was a young man," began Mr. Da Silva, "about 1894, there was a friend of mine named Hilmar Iversen, a Dane, who lived here in the town, up near the Moravian Church on what the people call 'Foun'-Out Hill.' Iversen had a position under the government, a clerk's job, and his office was in the Fort. On his way home he used to stop here almost every afternoon for a swizzel and a chat. We were great friends, close friends. He was then a man a little past fifty, a butter-tub of a fellow, very stout, and, like many of that build, he suffered from heart attacks.

"One night a boy came here for me. It was 11 o'clock, and I was just arranging the mosquito-net on my bed, ready to turn in. The servants had all gone home, so I went to the door myself, in shirt and trousers, and carrying a lamp, to see what was wanted,—or, rather, I knew perfectly well what it was,—a messenger to tell me Iversen was dead!"

Mr. Lee suddenly sat bolt-upright.

"How could you know that?" he enquired, his eyes wide.

Mr. Da Silva threw away the remains of his cigarette.

"I sometimes know things like that," he answered, slowly. "In this case, Iversen and I had been close friends for years. He and I had talked about magic and that sort of thing a great deal, occult powers, manifestations,—that sort of thing. It is a very general topic here, as you may have seen. You would hear more of it if you continued to live here and settled into the ways of the island. In fact, Mr. Lee, Iversen and I had made a compact together. The one of us who 'went out' first, was to try to warn the other of it. You see, Mr. Lee, I had received Iversen's warning less than an hour before.

"I had been sitting out here on the gallery until 10 o'clock or so. I was in that very chair you are occupying. Iversen had been having a heart attack. I had been to see him that afternoon. He looked just as he always did when he was recovering from an attack. In fact he intended to return to his office the following morning. Neither of us, I am sure, had given a thought to the possibility of a sudden sinking spell. We had not even referred to our agreement.

"Well, it was about 10, as I've said, when all of a sudden I heard Iversen coming along through the yard below there, toward the house along that gravel path. He had, apparently, come through the gate from the Kongensgade—the King Street, as they call it nowadays—and I could hear his heavy step on the gravel very plainly. He had a slight limp. 'Heavy-crunch—light-crunch; heavy-crunch — light-crunch; plod-plod — plod-plod; old Iversen to the life; there was no mistaking his step. There was no moon that night. The half of a waning moon was due to show itself an hour and a half later, but just then it was virtually pitch-black down there in the garden.

"I got up out of my chair and walked over to the top of the steps. To tell you the truth, Mr. Lee, I rather suspected—I have a kind of aptitude for that sort of thing—that it was not Iversen himself: how shall I express it? I had the idea, from somewhere inside me, that it was Iversen trying to keep our agreement.

My instinct assured me that he had just died. I can not tell you how I knew it, but such was the case, Mr. Lee.

"So I waited, over there just behind you, at the top of the steps. The footfalls came along steadily. At the foot of the steps, out of the shadow of the hibiscus bushes, it was a trifle less black than farther down the path. There was a faint illumination, too, from a lamp inside the house. I knew that if it were Iversen, himself, I should be able to see him when the footsteps passed out of the deep shadow of the bushes. I did not speak.

"The footfalls came along toward that point, and passed it. I strained my eyes through the gloom, and I could see nothing. Then I knew, Mr. Lee, that Iversen had died, and that he was keeping his agreement.

"I came back here and sat down in my chair, and waited. The footfalls began to come up the steps. They came along the floor of the gallery, straight toward me. They stopped here, Mr. Lee, just beside me. I could *feel* Iversen standing here, Mr. Lee." Mr. Da Silva pointed to the floor with his slim, rather elegant hand.

"Suddenly, in the dead quiet, I could feel my hair stand up all over my scalp, straight and stiff. The chills started to run down my back, and up again, Mr. Lee. I shook like a man with the ague, sitting here in my chair.

"I said: 'Iversen, I understand! Iversen, I'm afraid!' My teeth were chattering like castanets, Mr. Lee. I said: 'Iversen, please go! You have kept the agreement. I am sorry I am afraid, Iversen. The flesh is weak! I am not afraid of *you*, Iversen, old friend. But you will understand, man! It's not ordinary fear. My intellect is all right, Iversen, but I'm badly panic-stricken, so please go, my friend.'

"There had been silence, Mr. Lee, as I said, before I began to speak to Iversen, for the footsteps had stopped here beside me. But when I said that, and asked my friend to go, I could *feel* that he went at once, and I knew that he had understood how I meant it! It was, suddenly, Mr. Lee, as though there had never been any footsteps, if you see what I mean. It is hard to put into words. I daresay, if I had been one of the laborers, I should have been half-way to Christiansted through the estates, Mr. Lee, but I was not so frightened that I could not stand my ground.

"After I had recovered myself a little, and my scalp had ceased its prickling, and the chills were no longer running up and down my spine, I rose, and I felt extremely weary, Mr. Lee. It had been exhausting. I came into the house and drank a large tot of French brandy, and then I felt better, more like myself. I took my hurricane-lantern and lighted it, and stepped down the path toward the gate leading to the Kongensgade. There was one thing I wished to see down there at the end of the garden. I wanted to see if the gate was fastened, Mr. Lee. It was. That huge iron staple that you noticed, was in place. It has been used to fasten that old gate since some time in the Eighteenth Century, I imagine. I had not supposed anyone had opened the gate, Mr. Lee, but now I knew. There were no footprints in the gravel, Mr. Lee. I looked, carefully. The marks of the bush-broom where the house-boy had swept the path on his way back from closing the gate were undisturbed, Mr. Lee.

"I was satisfied, and no longer, even a little, frightened. I came back here and sat down, and thought about my long friendship with old Iversen. I felt very sad to know that I should not see him again alive. He would never stop here again afternoons for a swizzel and a chat. About 11 o'clock I went inside the house and

was preparing for bed when the rapping came at the front door. You see, Mr. Lee, I knew at once what it would mean.

"I went to the door, in shirt and trousers and stocking feet, carrying a lamp. We did not have electric light in those days. At the door stood Iversen's house-boy, a young fellow about eighteen. He was half-asleep, and very much upset. He 'cut his eyes' at me, and said nothing.

"'What is it, mon?' I asked the boy.

"'Mistress Iversen send ax yo' sir, please come to de house. Mr. Iversen die, sir.'

"'What time Mr. Iversen die, mon,—you hear?'

"'I ain' able to say what o'clock, sir. Mistress Iversen come wake me where I sleep in a room in the yard, sir, an' sen' me please cahl you,—I t'ink he die aboht an hour ago, sir.'

"I put on my shoes again, and the rest of my clothes, and picked up a St. Kitts supplejack—I'll get you one; it's one of those limber, grapevine walking sticks, a handy thing on a dark night—and started with the boy for Iversen's house.

"When we had arrived almost at the Moravian Church, I saw something ahead, near the roadside. It was then about 11:15, and the streets were deserted. What I saw made me curious to test something. I paused, and told the boy to run on ahead and tell Mrs. Iversen I would be there shortly. The boy started to trot ahead. He was pure black, Mr. Lee, but he went past what I saw without noticing it. He swerved a little away from it, and I think, perhaps, he slightly quickened his pace just at that point, but that was all."

"What did you see?" asked Mr. Lee, interrupting. He spoke a trifle breathlessly. His left lung was, as yet, far from being healed.

"The 'Hanging Jumbee,'" replied Mr. Da Silva, in his usual tones.

"Yes! There at the side of the road were three Jumbees. There's a reference to that in *The History of Stewart McCann*. Perhaps you've run across that, eh?"

Mr. Lee nodded, and Mr. Da Silva quoted:

"There they hung, though no ladder's rung
Supported their dangling feet.

"And there's another line in *The History,*" he continued, smiling, "which describes a typical group of Hanging Jumbee:

"Maiden, man-child, and shrew.

"Well, there were the usual three Jumbees, apparently hanging in the air. It wasn't very light, but I could make out a boy of about twelve, a young girl, and a shriveled old woman,—what the author of *The History of Stewart McCann* meant by the word 'shrew.' He told me himself, by the way, Mr. Lee, that he had put feet on his Jumbees mostly for the sake of a convenient rime,—poetic license! The Hanging Jumbee have no feet. It is one of their peculiarities. Their legs stop at the ankles. They have abnormally long, thin legs—African legs. They are always black, you know. Their feet—if they have them—are always hidden in a kind of mist that lies along the ground wherever one sees them. They shift and 'weave', as a full-blooded African does—standing on one foot and resting the other—you've noticed that, of course—or scratching the supporting ankle with the toes of the other foot. They do not swing in the sense that they seem to be swung on a rope,—that is not what it means; they do not twirl about. But they do—always—face the oncomer . . .

"I walked on, slowly, and passed them; and they kept their faces to me as they always do. I'm used to that . . .

"I went up the steps of the house to the front gallery, and found Mrs. Iversen waiting for me. Her sister

was with her, too. I remained sitting with them for the best part of an hour. Then two old black women who had been sent for, into the country, arrived. These were two old women who were accustomed to prepare the dead for burial. Then I persuaded the ladies to retire, and started to come home myself.

"It was a little past midnight, perhaps 12:15. I picked out my own hat from two or three of poor old Iversen's that were hanging on the rack, took my supplejack, and stepped out of the door onto the little stone gallery at the head of the steps.

"There are about twelve or thirteen steps from the gallery down to the street. As I started down them I noticed a third old black woman sitting, all huddled together, on the bottom step, with her back to me. I thought at once that this must be some old crone who lived with the other two,—the preparers of the dead. I imagined that she had been afraid to remain alone in their cabin, and so had accompanied them into the town,—they are like children, you know, in some ways,—and that, feeling too humble to come into the house, she had sat down to wait on the step and had fallen asleep. You've heard their proverbs, have you not? There's one that exactly fits this situation that I had imagined: 'Cockroach no wear crockin' boot when he creep in fowl-house!' It means: 'Be very reserved when in the presence of your betters!' Quaint, rather! The poor souls!

"I started to walk down the steps toward the old woman. That scant half-moon had come up into the sky while I had been sitting with the ladies, and by its light everything was fairly sharply defined. I could see that old woman as plainly as I can see you now, Mr. Lee. In fact, I was looking directly at the poor old creature as I came down the steps, and fumbling in my pocket for a few coppers for her—for tobacco and sugar, as they say! I was wondering, indeed, why she was not by this time on her feet and making one of their queer little bobbing bows—'cockroach bow to fowl,' as they might say! It seemed this old woman must have fallen into a very deep sleep, for she had not moved at all, although ordinarily she would have heard me, for the night was deathly still, and their hearing is extraordinarily acute, like a cat's, or a dog's. I remember that the fragrance from Mrs. Iversen's tuberoses, in pots on the gallery railing, was pouring out in a stream that night, 'making a greeting for the moon!' It was almost overpowering.

"Just as I was putting my foot on the fifth step, there came a tiny little puff of fresh breeze from somewhere in the hills behind Iversen's house. It rustled the dry fronds of a palm-tree that was growing beside the steps. I turned my head in that direction for an instant.

"Mr. Lee, when I looked back, down the steps, after what must have been a fifth of a second's inattention, that little old black woman who had been huddled up there on the lowest step, apparently sound asleep, was gone. She had vanished utterly—and, Mr. Lee, a little white dog, about the size of a French poodle, was bounding up the steps toward me. With every bound, a step at a leap, the dog increased in size. It seemed to swell out there before my very eyes.

"Then I was, really, frightened—thoroughly, utterly frightened. I knew if that 'animal' so much as touched me, it meant death, Mr. Lee—absolute, certain death. The little old woman was a 'sheen,'—*chien*, of course. You know of lycanthropy,—wolf-change,—of course. Well, this was one of our varieties of it. I do not know what it would be called, I'm sure. 'Canicanthropy,' perhaps. I don't know, but something—something first-cousin-once-removed from

lycanthropy, and on the downward scale, Mr. Lee. The old woman was a were-dog!

"Of course, I had no time to think, only to use my instinct. I swung my supplejack with all my might and brought it down squarely on that beast's head. It was only a step below me, then, and I could see the faint moonlight sparkle on the slaver about its mouth. It was then, it seemed to me, about the size of a medium-sized dog,—nearly wolf-size, Mr. Lee, and a kind of deathly white. I was desperate, and the force with which I struck caused me to lose my balance. I did not fall, but it required a moment or two for me to regain my equilibrium. When I felt my feet firm under me again, I looked about, frantically, on all sides, for the 'dog'. But it, too, Mr. Lee, like the old woman, had quite disappeared. I looked all about, you may well imagine, after that experience, in the clear, thin moonlight. For yards about the foot of the steps, there was no place—not even a small nook—where either the 'dog' or the old woman could have been concealed. Neither was on the gallery, which was only a few feet square, a mere landing.

"But there came to my ears, sharpened by that night's experiences, from far out among the plantations at the rear of Iversen's house, the pad-pad of naked feet. Someone—something—was running, desperately, off in the direction of the center of the island, back into the hills, into the deep 'bush'.

"Then, behind me, out of the house onto the gallery rushed the two old women who had been preparing Iversen's body for its burial. They were enormously excited, and they shouted at me unintelligibly. I will have to render their words for you.

" 'O, de Good Gahd protec' you, Marster Jaffray, sir,—de Joombie, de Joombie! De 'Sheen', Marster Jaffray! He go, sir?'

"I reassured the poor old souls, and went back home."

MR. DA SILVA fell abruptly silent. He slowly shifted his position in his chair, and reached for, and lighted, a fresh cigarette.

Mr. Lee was absolutely silent. He did not move. Mr. Da Silva resumed, deliberately, after obtaining a light.

"You see, Mr. Lee, the West Indies are different from any other place in the world, I verily believe, sir. I've said so, anyhow, many a time, although I have never been out of the islands except when I was a young man, to Copenhagen. I've told you, exactly, what happened that particular night."

Mr. Lee heaved a sigh.

"Thank you, Mr. Da Silva, very much indeed, sir," said he, thoughtfully, and made as though to rise. His service wrist-watch indicated 6 o'clock.

"Let us have a fresh swizzel, at least, before you go," suggested Mr. Da Silva. "We have a saying here in the island, that 'a man can't travel on one leg!' Perhaps you've heard it already."

"I have," said Mr. Lee.

"Knud, Knud! You hear, mon? Knud,—tell Charlotte to mash up another bal' of ice,—you hear? Quickly now," commanded Mr. Da Silva.

WEIRD STORY REPRINTS

No. 15

The Tapestried Chamber

By SIR WALTER SCOTT

THE following narrative is given from the pen, so far as memory permits, in the same character in which it was presented to the author's ear; nor has he claim to further praise, or to be more deeply censured, than in proportion to the good or bad judgment which he has employed in selecting his materials, as he has studiously avoided any attempt at ornament which might interfere with the simplicity of the tale.

At the same time it must be admitted, that the particular class of stories which turns on the marvelous possesses a stronger influence when told than when committed to print. The volume taken up at noonday, though rehearsing the same incidents, conveys a much more feeble impression than is achieved by the voice of the speaker on a circle of fireside auditors, who hang upon the narrative as the narrator details the minute incidents which serve to give it authenticity, and lowers his voice with an affectation of mystery while he approaches the fearful and wonderful part. It was with such advantages that the present writer heard the following events related, more than twenty years since, by the celebrated Miss Seward of Litchfield, who to her numerous accomplishments added, in a remarkable degree, the power of narrative in private conversation. In its present form the tale must necessarily lose all the interest which was attached to it by the flexible voice and intelligent features of the gifted narrator. Yet still, read aloud, to an undoubting audience by the doubtful light of the closing evening, or, in silence, by a decaying taper, and amidst the solitude of a half-lighted apartment, it may redeem its character as a good ghost-story. Miss Seward always affirmed that she had derived her information from an authentic source, although she suppressed the names of the two persons chiefly concerned. I will not avail myself of any particulars I may have since received concerning the localities of the story, but suffer them to rest under the same general description in which they were first related to me; and, for the same reason, I will not add to, or diminish, the narrative by any circumstance, whether more or less material, but simply rehearse, as I heard it, a story of supernatural terror.

ABOUT the end of the American war, when the officers of Lord Cornwallis' army, which surrendered at Yorktown, and others, who had been made prisoners during the impolitic and ill-fated controversy, were returning to their own country, to relate their adventures and repose themselves after their fatigues, there was amongst them a general officer, to whom Miss S. gave the name of Browne, but merely, as I understood, to save the inconvenience of introduc-

ing a nameless agent in the narrative. He was an officer of merit, as well as a gentleman of high consideration for family and attainments.

Some business had carried General Browne upon a tour through the western counties, when, in the conclusion of a morning stage, he found himself in the vicinity of a small country town, which presented a scene of uncommon beauty, and of a character peculiarly English.

The little town, with its stately old church, whose tower bore testimony to the devotion of ages long past, lay amidst pastures and cornfields of small extent, but bounded and divided with hedgerow timber of great age and size. There were few marks of modern improvement. The environs of the place intimated neither the solitude of decay nor the bustle of novelty; the houses were old, but in good repair; and the beautiful little river murmured freely on its way to the left of the town, neither restrained by a dam nor bordered by a towing-path.

Upon a gentle eminence, nearly a mile to the southward of the town, were seen, amongst many venerable oaks and tangled thickets, the turrets of a castle, as old as the wars of York and Lancaster, but which seemed to have received important alterations during the age of Elizabeth and her successor. It had not been a place of great size; but whatever accommodation it formerly afforded was, it must be supposed, still to be obtained within its walls; at least such was the inference which General Browne drew from observing the smoke arise merrily from several of the ancient wreathed and carved chimney-stalks. The wall of the park ran alongside of the highway for two or three hundred yards; and through the different points by which the eye found glimpses into the woodland scenery it seemed to be well stocked. Other points of view opened in succession—now a full one of the front of the old castle, and now a side glimpse at its particular towers, the former rich in all the bizarrerie of the Elizabethan school, while the simple and solid strength of other parts of the building seemed to show that they had been raised more for defense than ostentation.

Delighted with the partial glimpses which he obtained of the castle through the woods and glades by which this ancient feudal fortress was surrounded, our military traveler was determined to inquire whether it might not deserve a nearer view, and whether it contained family pictures or other objects of curiosity worthy of a stranger's visit, when, leaving the vicinity of the park, he rolled through a clean and well-paved street, and stopped at the door of a well-frequented inn.

Before ordering horses to proceed on his journey, General Browne made inquiries concerning the proprietor of the château which had so attracted his admiration; and was equally surprized and pleased at hearing in reply a nobleman named whom we shall call Lord Woodville. How fortunate! Much of Browne's early recollections, both at school and at college, had been connected with young Woodville, whom, by a few questions, he now ascertained to be the same with the owner of this fair domain. He had been raised to the peerage by the decease of his father a few months before, and, as the general learned from the landlord, the term of mourning being ended, was now taking possession of his paternal estate, in the jovial season of merry autumn, accompanied by a select party of friends, to enjoy the sports of a country famous for game.

This was delightful news to our traveler. Frank Woodville had been Richard Browne's fag at Eton, and his chosen intimate at Christ Church; their pleasures and their tasks had been the same; and the honest sol-

dier's heart warmed to find his early friend in possession of so delightful a residence, and of an estate, as the landlord assured him with a nod and a wink, fully adequate to maintain and add to his dignity. Nothing was more natural than that the traveler should suspend a journey which there was nothing to render hurried to pay a visit to an old friend under such agreeable circumstances.

The fresh horses, therefore, had only the brief task of conveying the general's traveling carriage to Woodville Castle. A porter admitted them at a modern Gothic lodge, built in that style to correspond with the castle itself, and at the same time rang a bell to give warning of the approach of visitors. Apparently the sound of the bell had suspended the separation of the company, bent on the various amusements of the morning; for, on entering the court of the château, several young men were lounging about in their sporting-dresses, looking at and criticizing the dogs, which the keepers held in readiness to attend their pastime. As General Browne alighted, the young lord came to the gate of the hall, and for an instant gazed, as at a stranger, upon the countenance of his friend, on which war, with its fatigues and its wounds, had made a great alteration. But the uncertainty lasted no longer than till the visitor had spoken, and the hearty greeting which followed was such as can only be exchanged betwixt those who have passed together the merry days of careless boyhood or early youth.

"If I could have formed a wish, my dear Browne," said Lord Woodville, "it would have been to have you here, of all men, upon this occasion, which my friends are good enough to hold as a sort of holiday. Do not think you have been unwatched during the years you have been absent from us. I have traced you through your dangers, your triumphs, your misfortunes, and was delighted to see that, whether in victory or defeat, the name of my old friend was always distinguished with applause."

The general made a suitable reply, and congratulated his friend on his new dignities, and the possession of a place and domain so beautiful.

"Nay, you have seen nothing of it as yet," said Lord Woodville, "and I trust you do not mean to leave us till you are better acquainted with it. It is true, I confess, that my present party is pretty large, and the old house, like other places of the kind, does not possess so much accommodation as the extent of the outward walls appears to promise. But we can give you a comfortable old-fashioned room, and I venture to suppose that your campaigns have taught you to be glad of worse quarters."

The general shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "I presume," he said, "the worst apartment in your château is considerably superior to the old tobacco-cask in which I was fain to take up my night's lodging when I was in the bush, as the Virginians call it, with the light corps. There I lay, like Diogenes himself, so delighted with my covering from the elements that I made a vain attempt to have it rolled on to my next quarters; but my commander for the time would give way to no such luxurious provision, and I took farewell of my beloved cask with tears in my eyes."

"Well, then, since you do not fear your quarters," said Lord Woodville, "you will stay with me a week at least. Of guns, dogs, fishing-rods, flies, and means of sport by sea and land, we have enough and to spare; you can not pitch on an amusement but we will find the means of pursuing it. But if you prefer the gun and pointers, I will go with you myself, and see whether you have mended your shooting since you have been amongst the Indians of the back settlements."

The general gladly accepted his friendly host's proposal in all its points. After a morning of manly exercise, the company met at dinner, where it was the delight of Lord Woodville to conduce to the display of the high properties of his recovered friend, so as to recommend him to his guests, most of whom were persons of distinction. He led General Browne to speak of the scenes he had witnessed; and as every word marked alike the brave officer and the sensible man, who retained possession of his cool judgment under the most imminent dangers, the company looked upon the soldier with general respect, as on one who had proved himself possessed of an uncommon portion of personal courage—that attribute, of all others, of which everybody desires to be thought possessed.

The day at Woodville Castle ended as usual in such mansions. The hospitality stopped within the limits of good order; music, in which the young lord was proficient, succeeded to the circulation of the bottle; cards and billiards, for those who preferred such amusements, were in readiness; but the exercise of the morning required early hours, and not long after 11 o'clock the guests began to retire to their several apartments.

The young lord himself conducted his friend, General Browne, to the chamber destined for him, which answered the description he had given of it, being comfortable, but old-fashioned. The bed was of the massive form used in the end of the Seventeenth Century, and the curtains of faded silk, heavily trimmed with tarnished gold. But then the sheets, pillows, and blankets looked delightful to the campaigner, when he thought of his "mansion, the cask." There was an air of gloom in the tapestry hangings which, with their worn-out graces, curtained the walls of the little chamber, and gently undulated as the autumnal breeze found its way through the ancient lattice-window, which pattered and whistled as the air gained entrance. The toilet, too, with its mirror, turbaned, after the manner of the beginning of the century, with a coiffure of murrey-colored silk, and its hundred strange-shaped boxes, providing for arrangements which had been obsolete for more than fifty years, had an antique, and in so far a melancholy, aspect. But nothing could blaze more brightly and cheerfully than the two large wax candles; or if aught could rival them, it was the flaming, bickering fagots in the chimney, that sent at once their gleam and their warmth through the snug apartment, which, notwithstanding the general antiquity of its appearance, was not wanting in the least convenience that modern habits rendered either necessary or desirable.

"This is an old-fashioned sleeping-apartment, General," said the young lord; "but I hope you find nothing that makes you envy your old tobacco-cask."

"I am not particular respecting my lodgings," replied the general; "yet were I to make any choice, I would prefer this chamber by many degrees to the gayer and more modern rooms of your family mansion. Believe me, that when I unite its modern air of comfort with its venerable antiquity, and recollect that it is your lordship's property, I shall feel in better quarters here than if I were in the best hotel London could afford."

"I trust—I have no doubt—that you will find yourself as comfortable as I wish you, my dear General," said the young nobleman; and once more bidding his guest good-night, he shook him by the hand and withdrew.

The general once more looked round him, and internally congratulating himself on his return to peaceful life, the comforts of which were endeared by the recollection of the

hardships and dangers he had lately sustained, undressed himself, and prepared for a luxurious night's rest.

Here, contrary to the custom of this species of tale, we leave the general in possession of his apartment until the next morning.

The company assembled for breakfast at an early hour, but without the appearance of General Browne, who seemed the guest that Lord Woodville was desirous of honoring above all whom his hospitality had assembled around him. He more than once expressed surprize at the general's absence, and at length sent a servant to make inquiry after him. The man brought back information that General Browne had been walking abroad since an early hour of the morning, in defiance of the weather, which was misty and ungenial.

"The custom of a solider," said the young nobleman to his friends; "many of them acquire habitual vigilance, and can not sleep after the early hour at which their duty usually commands them to be alert."

Yet the explanation which Lord Woodville thus offered to the company seemed hardly satisfactory to his own mind, and it was in a fit of silence and abstraction that he awaited the return of the general. It took place nearly an hour after the breakfast-bell had rung. He looked fatigued and feverish. His hair, the powdering and arrangement of which was at this time one of the most important occupations of a man's whole day, and marked his fashion as much as, in the present time, the tying of a cravat, or the want of one, was disheveled, uncurled, void of powder, and dank with dew. His clothes were huddled on with a careless negligence remarkable in a military man, whose real or supposed duties are usually held to include some attention to the toilet; and his looks were haggard and ghastly in a peculiar degree.

"So you have stolen a march upon us this morning, my dear General," said Lord Woodville; "or you have not found your bed so much to your mind as I had hoped and you seemed to expect. How did you rest last night?"

"Oh, excellently well—remarkably well—never better in my life!" said General Browne rapidly, and yet with an air of embrarassment which was obvious to his friend. He then hastily swallowed a cup of tea, and, neglecting or refusing whatever else was offered, seemed to fall into a fit of abstraction.

"You will take the gun today, General?" said his friend and host, but had to repeat the question twice ere he received the abrupt answer, "No, my lord; I am sorry I can not have the honor of spending another day with your lordship: my post-horses are ordered, and will be here directly."

All who were present showed surprize, and Lord Woodville immediately replied, "Post-horses, my good friend! What can you possibly want with them, when you promised to stay with me quietly for at least a week?"

"I believe," said the general, obviously much embarrassed, "that I might, in the pleasure of my first meeting with your lordship, have said something about stopping here a few days; but I have since found it altogether impossible."

"That is very extraordinary," answered the young nobleman. "You seemed quite disengaged yesterday, and you can not have had a summons today; for our post has not come up from the town, and therefore you can not have received any letters."

General Browne, without giving any further explanation, muttered something of indispensable business, and insisted on the absolute necessity of his departure in a manner which silenced all opposition on the part of his host, who saw that his resolution

was taken, and forebore all further importunity.

"At least, however," he said, "permit me, my dear Browne, since go you will or must, to show you the view from the terrace, which the mist, that is now rising, will soon display."

He threw open a sash-window and stepped down upon the terrace as he spoke. The general followed him mechanically, but seemed little to attend to what his host was saying, as, looking across an extended and rich prospect, he pointed out the different objects worthy of observation. Thus they moved on till Lord Woodville had attained his purpose of drawing his guest entirely apart from the rest of the company, when, turning round upon him with an air of great solemnity, he addressed him thus:

"Richard Browne, my old and very dear friend, we are now alone. Let me conjure you to answer me upon the word of a friend and the honor of a soldier. How did you in reality rest during last night?"

"Most wretchedly indeed, my lord," answered the general, in the same tone of solemnity; "so miserably, that I would not run the risk of such a second night, not only for all the lands belonging to this castle, but for all the country which I see from this elevated point of view."

"This is most extraordinary," said the young lord, as if speaking to himself; "then there must be something in the reports concerning that apartment." Again turning to the general, he said: "For God's sake, my dear friend, be candid with me, and let me know the disagreeable particulars which have befallen you under a roof where, with consent of the owner, you should have met nothing save comfort."

The general seemed distressed by this appeal, and paused a moment before he replied. "My dear lord," he at length said, "what happened to me last night is of a nature so peculiar and so unpleasant, that I could hardly bring myself to detail it even to your lordship, were it not that, independent of my wish to gratify any request of yours, I think that sincerity on my part may lead to some explanation about a circumstance equally painful and mysterious. To others, the communication I am about to make might place me in the light of a weak-minded, superstitious fool, who suffered his own imagination to delude and bewilder him; but you have known me in childhood and youth, and will not suspect me of having adopted in manhood the feelings and frailties from which my early years were free." Here he paused, and his friend replied.

"Do not doubt my perfect confidence in the truth of your communication, however strange it may be," replied Lord Woodville; "I know your firmness of disposition too well to suspect you could be made the object of imposition, and am aware that your honor and your friendship will equally deter you from exaggerating whatever you may have witnessed."

"Well, then," said the general, "I will proceed with my story as well as I can, relying upon your candor, and yet distinctly feeling that I would rather face a battery than recall to my mind the odious recollections of last night."

He paused a second time, and then perceiving that Lord Woodville remained silent and in an attitude of attention, he commenced, though not without obvious reluctance, the history of his night adventures in the Tapestried Chamber.

"I UNDRESSED and went to bed, so soon as your lordship left me yesterday evening; but the wood in the chimney, which nearly fronted my bed, blazed brightly and cheerfully, and, aided by a hundred exciting recollections of my childhood and youth, which had been recalled by the unex-

pected pleasure of meeting your lordship, prevented me from falling immediately asleep. I ought, however, to say, that these reflections were all of a pleasant and agreeable kind, grounded on a sense of having for a time exchanged the labor, fatigues, and dangers of my profession for the enjoyments of a peaceful life, and the reunion of those friendly and affectionate ties which I had torn asunder at the rude summons of war.

"While such pleasing reflections were stealing over my mind, and gradually lulling me to slumber, I was suddenly aroused by a sound like that of the rustling of a silken gown, and the tapping of a pair of high-heeled shoes, as if a woman were walking in the apartment. Ere I could draw the curtain to see what the matter was, the figure of a little woman passed between the bed and the fire. The back of this form was turned to me, and I could observe, from the shoulders and neck, it was that of an old woman, whose dress was an old-fashioned gown, which, I think, ladies call a sacque—that is, a sort of robe completely loose in the body, but gathered into broad plaits upon the neck and shoulders, which fall to the ground, and terminate in a species of train.

"I thought the intrusion singular enough, but never harbored for a moment the idea that what I saw was anything more than the mortal form of some old woman about the establishment, who had a fancy to dress like her grandmother, and who, having perhaps, as your lordship mentioned that you were rather straitened for room, been dislodged from her chamber for my accommodation, had forgotten the circumstances, and returned by 12 to her old haunt. Under this persuasion I moved myself in bed and coughed a little, to make the intruder sensible of my being in possession of the premises. She turned slowly round, but, gracious Heaven! my lord, what a countenance did she display to me! There was no longer any question what she was, or any thought of her being a living being. Upon a face which wore fixed features of a corpse were imprinted the traces of the vilest and most hideous passions which had animated her while she lived. The body of some atrocious criminal seemed to have been given up from the grave, and the soul restored from the penal fire, in order to form, for a space, a union with the ancient accomplice of its guilt. I started up in bed, and sat upright, supporting myself on my palms, as I gazed on this horrible specter. The hag made, as it seemed, a single and swift stride to the bed where I lay, and squatted herself down upon it, in precisely the same attitude which I had assumed in the extremity of horror, advancing her diabolical countenance within half a yard of mine, with a grin which seemed to intimate the malice and the derision of an incarnate fiend."

Here General Browne stopped, and wiped from his brow the cold perspiration with which the recollection of his horrible vision had covered it.

"My lord," he said, "I am no coward. I have been in all the mortal dangers incidental to my profession, and I may truly boast that no man ever knew Richard Browne to dishonor the sword he wears; but in these horrible circumstances, under the eyes, and, as it seemed, almost in the grasp, of the incarnation of an evil spirit, all firmness forsook me, all manhood melted from me like wax in the furnace, and I felt my hairs individually bristle. The current of my life-blood ceased to flow, and I sank back in a swoon, as very a victim to panic terror as ever was a village girl or a child of ten years old. How long I lay in this condition I can not pretend to guess.

"But I was roused by the castle clock striking one, so loud that it seemed as if it were in the very room.

It was some time before I dared open my eyes, lest they should again encounter the horrible spectacle. When, however, I summoned courage to look up, she was no longer visible. My first idea was to pull my bell, wake the servants, and remove to a garret or a hay-loft, to be insured against a second visitation. Nay, I will confess the truth, that my resolution was altered, not by the shame of exposing myself, but by the fear that, as the bell-cord hung by the chimney, I might, in making my way to it, be again crossed by the fiendish hag, who, I figured to myself, might be still lurking about some corner of the apartment.

"I will not pretend to describe what hot and cold fever-fits tormented me for the rest of the night, through broken sleep, weary vigils, and that dubious state which forms the neutral ground between them. A hundred terrible objects appeared to haunt me; but there was the great difference betwixt the vision which I have described and those which followed, that I knew the last to be deceptions of my own fancy and over-excited nerves.

"Day at last appeared, and I rose from my bed ill in health and humiliated in mind. I was ashamed of myself as a man and a soldier, and still more so at feeling my own extreme desire to escape from the haunted apartment, which, however, conquered all other considerations; so that, huddling on my clothes with the most careless haste, I made my escape from your lordship's mansion, to seek in the open air some relief to my nervous system, shaken as it was by this horrible rencounter with a visitant, for such I must believe her, from the other world. Your lordship has now heard the cause of my discomposure, and of my sudden desire to leave your hospitable castle. In other places I trust we may often meet; but God protect me from ever spending a second night under that roof!"

STRANGE as the general's tale was, he spoke with such a deep air of conviction, that it cut short all the usual commentaries which are made on such stories. Lord Woodville never once asked him if he was sure he did not dream of the apparition, or suggested any of the possibilities by which it is fashionable to explain supernatural appearances, as wild vagaries of the fancy or deceptions of the optic nerves. On the contrary, he seemed deeply impressed with the truth and reality of what he had heard; and, after a considerable pause, regretted, with much appearance of sincerity, that his early friend should in his house have suffered so severely.

"I am the more sorry for your pain, my dear Browne," he continued, "that it is the unhappy, though most unexpected, result of an experiment of my own. You must know that, for my father and grandfather's time, at least, the apartment which was assigned to you last night had been shut on account of reports that it was disturbed by supernatural sights and noises. When I came, a few weeks since, into possession of the estate, I thought the accommodation which the castle afforded for my friends was not extensive enough to permit the inhabitants of the invisible world to retain possession of a comfortable sleeping-apartment. I therefore caused the Tapestried Chamber, as we call it, to be opened; and, without destroying its air of antiquity, I had such new articles of furniture placed in it as became the modern times. Yet, as the opinion that the room was haunted very strongly prevailed among the domestics, and was also known in the neighborhood and to many of my friends, I feared some prejudice might be entertained by the first occupant of the Tapestried Chamber, which might tend to revive

the evil report which it had labored under, and so disappoint my purpose of rendering it a useful part of the house. I must confess, my dear Browne, that your arrival yesterday, agreeable to me for a thousand reasons besides, seemed the most favorable opportunity of removing the unpleasant rumors which attached to the room, since your courage was indubitable, and your mind free of any preoccupation on the subject, I could not, therefore, have chosen a more fitting subject for my experiment."

"Upon my life," said General Browne, somewhat hastily, "I am infinitely obliged to your lordship—very particularly indebted, indeed. I am likely to remember for some time the consequences of the experiment, as your lordship is pleased to call it."

"Nay, now you are unjust, my dear friend," said Lord Woodville. "You have only to reflect for a single moment, in order to be convinced that I could not augur the possibility of the pain to which you have been so unhappily exposed. I was yesterday morning a complete skeptic on the subject of supernatural appearances. Nay, I am sure that, had I told you what was said about that room, those very reports would have induced you, by your own choice, to select it for your accommodation. It was my misfortune, perhaps my error, but really can not be termed my fault, that you have been afflicted so strangely."

"Strangely indeed!" said the general, resuming his good temper; "and I acknowledge that I have no right to be offended with your lordship for treating me like what I used to think myself, a man of some firmness and courage. But I see my post-horses are arrived, and I must not detain your lordship from your amusement."

"Nay, my old friend," said Lord Woodville, "since you can not stay with us another day, which, indeed, I can no longer urge, give me at least half an hour more. You used to love pictures, and I have a gallery of portraits, some of them by Vandyke, representing ancestry to whom this property and castle formerly belonged. I think that several of them will strike you as possessing merit."

General Browne accepted the invitation, though somewhat unwillingly. It was evident he was not to breathe freely or at ease till he left Woodville Castle far behind him. He could not refuse his friend's invitation, however; and the less so, that he was a little ashamed of the peevishness which he had displayed toward his well-meaning entertainer.

The general, therefore, followed Lord Woodville through several rooms, into a long gallery hung with pictures, which the latter pointed out to his guest, telling the names, and giving some account, of the personages whose portraits presented themselves in progression. General Browne was but little interested in the details which these accounts conveyed to him. They were, indeed, of the kind which are usually found in an old family gallery. Here was a cavalier who had ruined the estate in the royal cause; there a fine lady who had reinstated it by contracting a match with a wealthy Roundhead. There hung a gallant who had been in danger for corresponding with the exiled court at St. Germain's; here one who had taken arms for William at the Revolution; and there a third that had thrown his weight alternately into the scale of Whig and Tory.

While Lord Woodville was cramming these words into his guest's ear, "against the stomach of his sense," they gained the middle of the gallery, when he beheld General Browne suddenly start, and assume an attitude of the utmost surprize, not unmixed with fear, as his eyes were caught and suddenly riveted by a portrait of an old lady in a sacque, the fashionable

dress of the end of the Seventeenth Century.

"There she is!" he exclaimed; "there she is, in form and features, though inferior in demoniac expression to the accursed hag who visited me last night."

"If that be the case," said the young nobleman, "there can remain no longer any doubt of the horrible reality of your apparition. That is the picture of a wretched ancestress of mine, of whose crimes a black and fearful catalogue is recorded in a family history in my charter-chest. The recital of them would be too horrible; it is enough to say, that in yon fatal apartment incest and unnatural murder were committed. I will restore it to the solitude to which the better judgment of those who preceded me had consigned it; and never shall anyone, so long as I can prevent it, be exposed to a repetition of the supernatural horrors, which could shake such courage as yours."

Thus the friends, who had met with such glee, parted in a very different mood—Lord Woodville to command the Tapestried Chamber to be unmantled and the door built up; and General Browne to seek in some less beautiful country, and with some less dignified friend, forgetfulness of the painful night which he had passed in Woodville Castle.

BARNACLES

By SIDNEY LANIER

(Reprint)

My soul is sailing through the sea,
But the Past is heavy and hindereth me.
The Past hath crusted cumbrous shells
That hold the flesh of cold sea-mells
    About my soul.
The huge waves wash, the high waves roll,
Each barnacle clingeth and worketh dole
    And hindereth me from sailing.

Old Past let go, and drop i' the sea
Till fathomless waters cover thee!
For I am living but thou art dead;
Thou drawest back, I strive ahead
    The Day to find.
Thy shells unbind! Night comes behind,
I needs must hurry with the wind
    And trim me best for sailing.

An Unusual Ghost Story

The Cat of Chiltern Castle

By MARY SHARON

WHEN Gene Winthrop invited me to come up during the hunting season and try for an elk, I accepted with alacrity. I had not seen my strapping cousin since his return from overseas, and I anticipated a pleasant visit.

Having been left a small fortune by a bachelor uncle, he had traveled extensively before enlisting in the World War. I had spent many a pleasant hour in his company listening to him recount, in his inimitable manner, the many and strange adventures that had befallen him.

Gene's cabin stood a half-mile above the stage-line road on Wind-river Point in the Teton Range. The stage driver dumped me and my belongings unceremoniously by the roadside, and disappeared in a flurry of snow. I watched hopefully for a sight of Gene's strapping figure, expecting any minute to see him come around the bend in the trail. Dusk deepened with startling suddenness and I decided to try to find my way alone. I could not understand what had kept him from meeting me. I wondered if my letter had miscarried.

I have always prided myself on having my full share of feminine courage, but as I stumbled along the trail I felt distinctly nervous. The distant yowl of a wildcat sent a shiver of apprehension down my spine; and as I scrambled up the rocky path, I fancied I heard the soft pad-pad of stealthy feet following me. Chiding myself for a tenderfoot, I unlocked my case and took out my gun. As I drew it out, I caught sight of something moving in the brush to my left. I tried to convince myself that it was the night wind moving the branches, but I knew it for something more sinister. I saw it moving toward me,—a dark blot among the foliage of the underbrush. Without hesitating, I fired. When I looked again, it was no longer there. Before I had time to investigate, a shot sounded below me, and then a flashlight glimmered down the trail. I hallooed. Gene answered. When he reached me, he was out of breath and strangely shaken.

"What was it?" I asked without preface.

"A cat." He shrugged his shoulders with elaborate carelessness.

When we entered the cabin, I saw that his hair was matted with blood above his left temple. At my exclamation, he reassured me.

"It is nothing. A dry branch gave me a scratch, nothing more."

I was astounded at the change in his physical appearance. He was stoop-shouldered and gaunt. His hair was streaked with gray and he had an air of fearful alertness as if waiting momentarily for some grim, unavoidable happening. More evidence of the change that had come over him lay in the neglected and run-down state of his cabin. On all my previous visits I had noticed the clean, almost

womanly, tidiness that had prevailed. To judge from the appearance of the place, he had not attempted to clean it in the three months that had elapsed since his return from overseas.

He made an effort to appear at ease and cooked an appetizing supper for us, but I noticed that at the end of the meal his own food lay virtually untouched before him. After supper he walked into the living room, threw more logs upon the fire and motioned for me to be seated. Our talk was desultory, almost formal.

It was a beastly night outside. The wind howled around the corner of the cabin like so many lost souls, and the insistent tap-tap of the icy branches against the windowpanes did not lessen the effect. Winthrop sat staring moodily into the fire, and I noted the ravages that the year had made in his physique. I wanted to ask what had caused the terrible change in him, but a certain reticence forbade prying. I felt if there were anything that I could do for him, he would ask it of me, for we had been reared together as children and were as close as most brothers and sisters.

A particularly heavy blast of wind assailed the cabin and a shower of sparks flew up the chimney from the pitch logs, which were roaring on the hearth. Winthrop shuddered involuntarily. I sought to arouse him.

"Doesn't this place get on your nerves, Gene, so far from everyone and everything?"

He started at my question and then drew savagely at his pipe. Suddenly he sat up and held his head cocked in an attitude of listening. Abject terror shone from his bulging eyes.

"Did you hear it?" he demanded.

"Nothing but the storm," I told him truthfully. "What is on your mind, old fellow? Anything that telling might help you to forget?"

He pondered a moment. There was a hopeless, negative intonation in his voice when he answered.

"I don't believe anyone can help me, Mary. It is something just a trifle beyond the province of mere man. Do you believe in ghosts?"

Something had prepared me for his question. I had known intuitively that his was a dread of the supernatural, for nothing on earth could have brought that look of awful fear to the face of the Eugene Winthrop I had known. I hardly knew how to answer him.

"I can't say that I do, Gene. We are all doubting Thomases about everything until we see it for ourselves."

He turned toward me with an air of positive assurance and his voice was quietly assertive.

"I have seen and I believe, Mary. I am afraid you will think me insane. Perhaps I am, but I am going to tell you all about it."

And then he began his weird story that left me shaken more than I care even now to admit.

"When I was in France, I fell in with an Englishman who had enlisted under the name of Tom Grant, though he gave me to understand that this was an alias. He was a darned good fellow, foolhardy, reckless and pleasure-loving, with a nerve that would have faced down the devil himself. When everything was over, we went to London together, and it was there that he learned from a second-rate solicitor that he had fallen heir to a debt-ridden old ruin—the Castle of Chiltern.

"I shared his desire to see what remained of the once stately fortress that had sheltered his famous ancestors; for the line of Chiltern had written its name in the early pages of English history. We went. Before our departure, the old solicitor told us that a family ghost went with the castle,—a cat. We both laughed in

his face to think that a house which had once held such prestige and power should elect to claim as its especial ghostly visitant, a cat. Tradition had it that several hundred years ago, a serving-woman had imparted information to the enemies of the then-incumbent Lord of Chiltern, who in retaliation had shut her up in his dungeon, where the wretched woman starved to death. The cat, a huge black fellow, had been her pet, and its shade was supposed to be vested with the power of seven devils. The story was improbable enough to make anyone scoff at it, just as we did.

"We found the castle a ramshackle affair, though it took no great imagination to picture the grandeur it had once possessed. The grounds were enclosed by a high wall of crumbling masonry, around which at one time had been a moat. Both were now in the last stage of disintegration. The castle itself was barely habitable. The caretaker, a very old hag, volunteered to show us through the fortress, and we accepted her services, though they were somewhat surlily given. We found the entire structure in a sad state of decay.

"The night of our arrival was a stormy one. The wind howled fiendishly around the old walls, until they shook from turret to foundation stone. We expected the old ruin to topple over at any moment. It had drizzled through the early evening and, as it grew colder, settled in to snow. The room in which we spent the night was barely furnished. In one corner, projecting out into the center of the room, stood a huge canopied bed. The frayed and rotting silk hangings at the top attested its great age. A peculiar cabinet of old walnut stood in the far end of the room near the one large window, which, uncurtained, looked down upon the bleak and rock-strewn courtyard. Two high-backed chairs of nondescript age and appearance completed the furnishings of the room, with the exception of an old Venetian mirror, the one article of value and elegance left to the castle of the Chilterns.

"We went to bed, but did not sleep. There was something eery about the decaying old fortress that made us wakeful. We had left the candle burning in the old pewter stick, which the crone had given us before returning to her home.

"It must have been 2 o'clock when we heard *it*. During a lull in the storm a terrifying shriek rent the air.

"Tom leaped out of bed on one side and I on the other. As our feet struck the floor, a series of blood-curdling yowls, much too loud for a domestic cat but somewhat similar in other respects, sounded outside our door. We hurried into our clothes. When the yowling ceased, we heard a light scratching on the door. Insistent, steady as the beating of a heart, the scratching continued, increasing in volume until it sounded almost like a human hand knocking imperatively on the panels, which threatened any moment to give way.

"Given the same occurrence under different conditions, our reactions would probably have been different, but with the wind and storm assailing the old ruin from without and an unknown animal or supernatural something assailing us from within, we felt anything but brave. I acknowledge I was paralyzed with fear. A fellow can grapple with and perhaps overcome a mortal enemy, but the supernatural can not be vanquished by mere man; and that unearthly yowling and scratching resembled nothing I had ever heard.

"With an oath, Tom seized one of the chairs and motioned for me to do likewise. I lost no time, for the moth-eaten door afforded flimsy protection. The steady hammering and slashing continued, interspersed with

shrieks and yowls. Suddenly one of the panels splintered in. A heavy gust of wind extinguished the light and the room was left in total darkness. Another blow, and the entire door fell inward.

"Two green eyes glowed at us from the doorway. Tom screamed a warning as the eyes, like dancing lantern lights, swayed toward us. I lifted my chair to strike, but on the instant that I stood poised in readiness, the eyes were blotted from sight, and in that instant Tom gave an agonized shriek. A heavy thump followed, and all was still. I called fearfully to him and the old walls threw back my cry. I struck a match. Sprawled on the floor lay Tom's body.

"I hurriedly lit the candle and knelt to examine him. He was completely covered with knifelike cuts and scratches, and the blood was trickling from a hundred wounds. While I was kneeling over his body, cursing myself that I had failed him when a blow might have saved his life, that horrible yowling began again, becoming fainter and fainter until it blended with the din of the storm. I can never forget. I shall always hear it. I hear it now."

His face was a study of tragic despair. I could think of nothing to say to relieve the tenseness of the situation. He straightened in his chair and listened.

"Don't you hear it, Mary? Tell me the truth. Can't you hear that yowling, faint and far-off but coming nearer?"

I listened and I could hear it. The sound could be plainly distinguished above the din of the storm. Faint, but growing louder as if approaching the cabin. I hated to acknowledge to Gene that I could hear it, but I knew that if I did not, he would think he was suffering from some sort of hallucination. There came a lull in the storm and a scream, like nothing I ever heard before or since, sounded just outside the door. With white face and staring eyes, Gene sprang to his feet, and turning toward me, threw out his hands in a helpless gesture.

"It's no use, Mary. This is the third time. I may as well face it and have it over with."

He walked to the door and slid back the bolt. Before he could open it, I jerked him back.

"Don't go out there, Gene! That is a panther. Let me get a gun for you."

I turned to pick up my Winchester, wheeling in time to see him open the door and stagger out into the night. I leaped after him—too late. A shriek shrilled through the storm. I ran toward the spot whence it came. The wind blew open the door behind me and the glare of the cabin lamp threw a bar of light across the new-fallen snow.

I could see standing over the prostrate form of big Gene Winthrop a huge cat, the size of a collie dog, pitch-black, with green, wolfish eyes. I raised my gun and fired. I was so close that a miss was impossible. I fired twice. The bullets took no effect. The beast, without moving, melted into the shadows behind it. I tried to hunt it down, but how could one follow an evanescent thing of evil that departed, leaving no tracks behind it?

I dragged Gene's inert body inside. He was cut to ribbons. The thing sounds incredible, but it is true.

The coroner's jury turned in a verdict that "The deceased was killed by a panther"; but I know that they were wrong. I saw the beast that killed Gene Winthrop. It was a huge black cat, with wolfish eyes—the cat of Chiltern Castle.

FETTERED

A Serial Novel

By GREYE LA SPINA

The Story So Far

DR. DALE ARMITAGE warns his neighbors, Ewan Gillespie and his twin sister Bessie, who have come to the woods to spend the summer, that they must never invite his wife, Gretel Armitage, into their cabin, under pain of dire consequences so fearful that they would not believe him should he explain what those consequences were. He leaves with Bessie the key to the lodge where he keeps his wife imprisoned behind heavy bars, while he goes to the funeral of a child which has died of pernicious anemia.

Ewan, fearing the doctor's lodge may be struck by lightning, rescues Gretel in a roaring thunderstorm and brings her to his cabin, but is forced to carry her across the stream that runs between. Bessie surprizes Gretel in the dead of night, her lips pressed against Ewan's throat, and the next day Ewan is faint and white, and complains of pain in his throat from what he thinks is a spider-bite. Dr. Armitage explains to Bessie that Gretel is a human vampire, who has brought about the death of a seven-year-old child, and that she will attack Ewan again if she gets the opportunity. He places wild-rose sprays within the cabin, and orders Bessie to let her brother sleep and to admit no one; but Gretel sweeps across the stream in a cold, roaring wind and enters the cabin. Her eyes transfix Bessie, lulling her into drowsiness; and as Bessie feels Gretel's arms around her and Gretel's mouth against her throat, she utters a wailing cry of despair, and hears Dr. Armitage's answering shout from the forest.

CHAPTER 10

RESCUE

THERE were swimming, swirling clouds of gray and black, flecked with ruby points of dancing light. There were humming, droning sounds, broken in upon by staccato sharpnesses of speech, cracked by emotion into short but pregnant words. There was an aching of muscles, as if she had received repeated blows.

Bessie Gillespie struggled back into consciousness that did not for some time seem normal to her, for it was a strange and mysterious scene upon which her hazel eyes finally opened, half dazed.

She lay where Gretel Armitage must have flung her drooping body when the doctor had burst into the cabin with his electric flash; stretched in crumpled relaxation upon the board flooring, bruised and aching.

The doctor had stood his flashlight upon the floor in order to give light and at the same time leave his hands free for whatever action he found it necessary to take. The circles of light from the torch illuminated the ceiling and but dimly gave relief to the white faces of the doctor and his wife, as they confronted each other.

Gretel was obviously at bay. Her blue eyes were deep spheres of strange ruby fire. Between snarling red lips shone the pointed sharpness of her glistening white teeth. The expression upon that fair face was the look of a thwarted fiend. Her hands, lifted on either side of that terrible countenance, were like the talons of some unclean bird of prey. She crouched and cringed, as if in dire fear and fury.

The doctor, on the contrary, stood upright, his deep eyes glowing with what seemed to the wondering Bessie a strangely comforting radiance. His melancholy face was wearier than ever; sadder than ever; as if he had all at once found yet another burden to lay upon his soul. But behind that sadness a something surged and swelled and broke out in his few words that seemed charged with a more than ordinary pregnancy and power. It was as if he felt within himself that which would bear him on to triumph over evil, and feeling it, he had no fear for the outcome.

Painfully drawing herself into a

sitting posture, Bessie began to understand the actual words passing between those two, even though she could not seem to gain any real insight into their esoteric meaning.

"I didn't mean any harm," Gretel whined, those clawlike fingers curling and uncurling, a demoniacal expression on her face, as she slyly watched the doctor's every movement. "I would only have taken—a *little*—and you had frightened me—and I needed —*strength.*"

"You deliberately stole out of the home that in your better moments you had chosen as your earthly prison," charged the doctor sternly. "You deliberately came here, in a spirit of revenge against me, to hurt innocent people in the hope that this would hurt *me* most of all."

"But she *isn't* hurt," eagerly exclaimed his wife in a croaking voice, those clutching talons moving eerily about her face, throwing strangely writhing shadows across it.

"Because I came in time," retorted the doctor harshly, no pity showing in his grim face. "Another second, and you would have added this poor girl to your list of victims," he accused bitterly.

Bessie's hand went instinctively to her throat. Her fingers, examining the smooth surface with gingerly delicacy, found little roughnesses where those pointed teeth had met. She paled and listened strainedly, her fingers protectively over those tiny, terrible, ominous wounds, which she feared the doctor had not seen.

"But you didn't give me *time,*" almost complained Gretel, in a peevish whine. The interlacing shadows of her clawlike fingers moved more and more like dark serpents' trails over her writhing face. "I am still *parched*——"

"Enough, you fiend!" commanded the doctor sharply. "There is no repentance possible for you, is there, Gretel? No remorse? Well, you will go back to the lodge now, and after I have seen to these two people I shall return, and after that there will be less freedom of action for you, since you are no longer to be trusted. Make no mistake," he added quickly, as a kind of twisted smile drew up his wife's vivid lips, "when *I* am with you I am protected in ways that do not concern you. You see, my dear Gretel, *I take no chances,*" said he coldly.

"Oh! You wish to make me a perpetual prisoner! You, whose fault it is that I am as I am!" she shrilled, drawing herself upright at last. "Why don't you kill me, and drive a stake through my heart, and cut off my head, and be done with it, once for all?"

The doctor regarded her impersonally as she raged.

"Because that kind of thing isn't being done, my dear Gretel," he responded dryly after a moment's silence.

"That's not the true reason, Dale, and you know it isn't," she screamed back. "It's because even in your hard heart there's remorse for what you did to an innocent girl who loved you! That's why you don't dare do now what you think you will when I die! Ah—but you won't *then,* either."

Her face grew sly and narrow with cunning; the redly flashing eyes peered from beneath lowered lashes. A hissing little laugh that sent sick shudders over the listening Bessie came in gusts through the drawn red lips.

"What do you mean? Are you trying to threaten me again?" demanded Dr. Armitage. "If you are, I'll have this thing out with you here and now, for I'll not permit a Thing like you let loose upon the world while I can prevent it," he declared with definiteness.

"They'd send you to the electric chair," whispered his wife, trembling

with some secret mirth. "You wouldn't *dare*——"

"That is sufficient!" cried out the doctor, his voice raised with high authority. "Go home, Gretel! Go to your room. Sit down, think——"

"She's coming to herself," interrupted Gretel, those sly eyes now on Bessie's wide hazel orbs. "Did you hear what I said, Bessie Gillespie? Well, I'll say more. I'm sorry Dale came when he did, and the next time I come to you, Bessie, I won't come so gently," croaked the doctor's wife venomously.

"Oh!" cried out Bessie, appealing to Dale with anxious face.

"This man whom you think so wonderful, Bessie, is the cause of my —of my being—*what I am.*" Gretel broke into wild sobbing, beating the air with clawlike fingers while great tears tumbled down her working face. "He can't deny it," she choked out. "I was an innocent, unsuspecting girl, and he——"

"Oh, my God!" cried the baited physician in a kind of dogged despair. "*Will* you go home, Gretel?"

"Is it your fault? Tell her that, at least!" snarled his wife, tears and sobs ceasing with as much abruptness as they had begun.

There was a moment's silence. Bessie, sitting on the floor, her eyes going from one to the other, now sought the doctor's face, and his gaze, deep and melancholy, rested on her questioning but trustful countenance. At last he spoke, heavily:

"It was my fault, but——"

"You hear that?" Gretel shrieked exultantly. "He made me the Thing I have become, and now he wants to shut me up in one room until I die," she relapsed whiningly, and cringed before the darkness of her husband's lowering eyes.

Dale went across the room and extended his hands to Bessie, helping her to her feet and then to a chair. He scratched a match and soon the cheery, comforting yellow glow of the kerosene lamp brightened the eery shadows in the room, so that what had happened in that dancing half-light, what had been said even, appeared all at once a fantasy.

"I'm going," said Mrs. Armitage shortly, to her husband. "I'm—I'm sorry—in a way—for what has occurred tonight." Her eyes went to Bessie's still pale face in a peculiar fashion.

"Gretel, to hear you say you are sorry," began the doctor, when she spoke again, hastily.

"I was too precipitate," she murmured, hatefully. "I should have waited for a better opportunity," and she laughed vindictively.

"Go home, Gretel, before you anger me beyond my power of control," commanded the doctor, pointing to the door.

"You trust me to go alone, Dale? Aren't you afraid I may——?"

"You dare not!" he snapped at her sharply.

A wild cachinnation pealed from the red lips. The pointed little tongue moistened Gretel's mouth, protruding from the white pointed teeth with the lightning rapidity of a serpent's forked one. Her shoulders shook with her ugly mirth, its malignant undertones making Bessie shudder anew.

"So I am to go on home, with the agreeable prospect ahead of me of being immured for life?" said she. "And I am to leave my husband here with his new, his latest, fancy?" she finished scathingly, stabbing at Bessie with her light, pointed words. "Well, my dear, you are welcome to him, if you want him. He'll be mine, *eventually*. And in the meantime, I'd far rather have your complaisant, unsophisticated brother," she finished, with another peal of strange, eery laughter, as she went out into the night through the open cabin door. "But do not forget. Dale isn't too

clever for *me*, yet," she called back, menacingly.

The sound of her feet as they crunched dry branches under them went across the clearing. Then silence, and a low cry from the night.

"I forgot. The stream," explained the doctor in a low voice. "I'll be back, Bessie. I must carry her across the running water."

When the doctor returned, the girl asked curiously, "If she must be carried across the stream, how did she come this evening, from the lodge?"

"Bessie, she called upon certain elemental forces in nature that are bound, under given conditions, to serve her. That much she has gained from her study of Black Art. And these forces drew down from the icy north a bitter, biting, freezing wind. Gretel crossed that stream because the surface was frozen."

A stirring in Ewan's room called for their attention.

"Did she get in there?" demanded the doctor briefly.

Bessie shook her head.

"No. But he got up once and began pulling down the rose sprays. He threw the rosary on the floor. And we saw a terrible face"—she shuddered—"peering in at the window."

"That was her astral projection," the doctor explained. "I called her back when I got to the lodge."

He tiptoed to Ewan's side and looked down upon the young artist, whose breath came slowly and regularly. He was nodding with satisfaction when he went back to the living room.

"He'll come along nicely now," said he with a relieved sigh. "After this night's escapade Gretel will find herself so closely confined that she will be unable to escape my vigilance again," grimly. "Now let me see your throat, Bessie. She said she had not had time to injure you, but I can not take her word when she is fiend-inspired." He pushed the girl's chin up and with the electric torch in one hand made a close and careful examination of her neck. It's all right, dear. She tore the skin a bit with her sharp teeth, but there's been no blood drawn as yet; the wounds are perfectly dry. We'll put a bit of iodine on the wound, to avoid ordinary infection."

"Then I'm not like Ewan?" faltered the girl.

The doctor shook a decisive negative.

"Bessie, I came here, guided by providence, in the very nick of time. A fraction of a second later would have been too late. Good Lord, what a terrible mess it is!" he ended, with a heavy sigh that was almost a groan.

Bessie put her soft little hands to his working face and held his cheeks a moment in that tender, comforting pressure.

The doctor turned his face gently until his lips touched one caressing hand. Then he picked up the flashlight and turned toward the still open door.

"I must get back, brown girl, and have it out with Gretel," he sighed. "She agreed to some degree of restraint, but she has tasted human blood too often, and now she is harder to control. However, when daylight comes she is usually amenable to reason, and I hope to arrange matters so she can not emerge without my knowledge. Try to sleep, brown girl. Your brother is safe now, and so are you. Unless," he added darkly, "Gretel carried out her threat."

"Good night, dear Dale," said Bessie quietly, as she barred the door behind him.

Sleep she could not. The night's terrible happenings had been too nerve-disturbing for her to relax sufficiently for sleep. Doze she did, a little; conscious always of her surroundings and quickly responsive to

the slightest sound from her brother's room.

And so the darkness passed slowly away, until gray dawn began to tear down the night's dark defenses, that the morning sun might pour its cheering rays through the forest glades.

And in the half-light of dawn came the consciousness that for hours there had been a steady sound of marching footsteps outside the cabin. With the realization, Bessie came into full wakefulness and ran to the window to see who was without.

Like a sentinel on guard, Dr. Armitage paced back and forth before the cabin door, his head hanging wearily, his whole attitude one of resignation and despair.

CHAPTER 11

EWAN DEMANDS AN EXPLANATION

BEHIND her, Ewan came staring, just roused from a sleep that had done him much good, for his haggard face looked rested and his eyes were brighter, clearer, than they had been since the night of the big thunderstorm.

"Am I seeing straight, sis?" demanded the artist incredulously. "Is our good neighbor standing guard to protect us from the mysterious bug, or am I dreaming?"

The intuition of something not quite right gripped Bessie as she looked out at the doctor's robust figure, slightly bowed now as he walked with head down, as if heavily burdened by secret troubles.

"It's Dr. Armitage, Ewan. Watching over both of us. I'm going to ask him to have some coffee with us. Ewan"—her voice was serious as she drew back from the window to confront her amused, contemptuous brother—"you may never know how much you owe him, so I'm going to beg you to be pleasant to him."

"I'll be pleasant to him," agreed Ewan shortly, "but what he's done for me I'm going to find out. I don't intend to be kept in the dark like a baby, Bessie. Now that I've had a good night's sleep, I feel more like myself, and"—his hands went to his throat—"and it seems the poisonous bites about which both of you were so alarmed are getting better. I don't feel all drawn up into them, the way I did last night."

"Due entirely to Dr. Armitage's precautions, no matter how silly they seemed to you," said his sister, gravely.

"Due, dear Bessie, to the iodine you put on the bites before he arrived," asseverated the young artist lightly. "However, let's be nice to our neighbor, who's evidently been standing guard over us like a soldier on duty."

Ewan unbarred the cabin door, opened it, and hailed the doctor with a friendly intonation that brought a lighter look to Dale's melancholy face.

"Come in and have coffee with us, neighbor. My sister says you've been watching over us all night, and as I'm not distributing medals this morning you rate a hot drink, at least."

Dr. Armitage came into the cabin slowly, his footsteps heavy and his manner that of a man weighed down by apprehension. He took a chair and looked dully about the room as Bessie started breakfast preparations.

"It was kind of you to come back, Dale," said she, cutting bread deftly.

"I only hope I didn't alarm you," said the doctor absently.

"I didn't know until this morning," she confessed.

"Then you weren't disturbed after I left last night?" he queried with a quick glance at Ewan.

"I must have slept like the proverbial log all night," Ewan declared. "Due, of course, to the floral decorations," he added, with a quirk to his lips.

The doctor passed over this innuendo as a trifle of no importance.

"The main thing is that neither of you were disturbed. You see," and he hesitated, with a troubled gathering of his dark brows, "you see, my—Mrs. Armitage—didn't return to the lodge last night."

"What? Was she here last night?" cried Ewan, marveling at such an indiscretion on Gretel's part.

Bessie's face was white and she steadied her hand by a visible effort so as not to spill the coffee she was straining off.

"Where can she be?" murmured her voice tremblingly.

The doctor turned a ghastly face to hers. His eyes were burning in their sockets with the misery he was experiencing. He ignored the artist as if at that moment there were but two people in the world; himself and Bessie.

"My dear," said he very simply, "my dear, Gretel has gone to carry out her mad and wicked threat. I should not have trusted her out of my sight. I should have known that she would take that last desperate means of revenging herself upon me before I locked her up permanently. There can be no safety in this world or the next for your brother, and perhaps for us, until we can find her body, and do to her what I had to do to that pitiful baby that I told you about."

His voice broke. He leaned forward, resting his face on his cupped hands.

Bessie put down the coffee-pot abruptly, unearing that it marked the spotless oil-cloth of the kitchen table with black soot. She laid her hands softly on the doctor's head and stood in perfect silence, her hot tears of sympathy dropping on his hair.

"Are you people out of your minds?" questioned the artist, after staring at this scene with astonished face. "Bessie, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. That man is married," said Ewan's angry whisper. "Don't you understand?"

"I understand perfectly, Ewan. Don't be angry, dear. You—you see, *you* don't understand everything as *I* do. Poor Dale!" and she did not remove her tender hands.

"Jove! This is a ridiculous and disgraceful situation!" The artist, conveniently forgetting, manlike, his own derelictions of so recent occurrence, turned the volume of his indignation upon the physician. "Dr. Armitage, you are a married man, and you permit—you encourage—my sister—to—to——" he stuttered indignantly.

Dr. Armitage lifted his face from his palms.

"On the surface, Gillespie, you are right to be indignant with me, but as your sister just told you, you are aware of nothing that lies beneath this situation. If you did, in ever so small a manner, dream of it, you would not ask her to remove her comforting, gracious hands from my weary head," he said dejectedly.

Ewan looked from one to the other, puzzled.

"There's something darned queer about the whole situation, I'll tell the world. Out with it! If I'm to be so complaisant, I may as well know the reason why. I'm not a child, to be kept in the dark when there's anything important going on," he growled testily.

Bessie continued to stroke the doctor's hair until he put up his hands, took hers, and drew them down on one shoulder, where he held them under one of his.

"Gillespie, I have every reason to believe that your body and soul are, from now on, in such deadly peril that I hesitate to state the conditions from which this danger arises, for fear you will not believe me, and will refuse to be guided by my knowledge of what it may be best to do under these conditions."

"All this you've said before, and I'm feeling fine this morning," returned the artist truculently. "Whatever bit me"—and he grimaced at the recollection of his weakness of the previous day—"evidently poisoned me a bit, but I'm okeh now. So I can hardly apprehend any very immediate danger," dryly.

"Ewan! You're acting like a stupid schoolboy!" flashed his sister hotly. "It's just plain ignorance that makes you so cocksure. If you—if you'd gone through—with what I have," and her voice broke into a quaver, "you'd listen to what Dale has to say."

"What has happened to you, Bessie?" demanded her brother, going to her and putting his arms tenderly about her, drawing her away from the doctor and to himself.

Bessie's eyes questioned the physician, who nodded assent wearily.

"LAST night, Ewan, Gretel came here again," the girl began, speaking with difficulty as the horror of that night came back vividly to her memory. "She—she made me put out the light—and she—she tried to bite my throat as she did yours——"

"Bessie!" He shook her violently. "For God's sake, stop talking such nonsense! Good Lord, Armitage, is she serious?"

"Your sister is very well poised nervously, or she'd not even be able to speak of last night's happenings," declared the doctor, forcibly. "That is, without breaking down. Let me tell the rest. It's entirely too hard for her. She's had a grilling experience."

"But she said—Gretel—bit her throat? And mine. Why?"

"For the same reason," steadily replied the physician, rising and confronting the young man, who held his sister's head on his shoulder comfortingly.

"She—she—bit—me?" puzzled the artist stupidly. "Pardon me, but did I really hear you aright? Your wife—bit me?" He disengaged one arm from Bessie's shoulders to touch his throat, a strange look on his face. "Why—tell me why—your wife should—bite me? It—it sounds—like comic opera or something."

The doctor shook his hands in the air with a desperate gesture.

"Good God, man, can't you see that it is almost impossible to credit? Well, if you insist, she punctured your neck so that she could draw out your blood, for which she was thirsting, Gillespie."

Ewan turned Bessie's head back with a lightning gesture of fury. He pushed up the girl's chin gently but determinedly, and stared at her white throat, marred by two tiny punctures. Then he groaned aloud and caught her to him again, hiding her face on his shoulder.

"Then your wife is insane!" he croaked dryly, horror-stricken. "I—who—would have—dreamed it!"

"You thought her a martyr and me a brutally jealous husband, of course," said the doctor patiently. "That was to have been expected. It is her rôle, and mine, as she makes them out."

"But why should she want to suck my blood?" asked the artist, distastefully.

"You see, Bessie?" exclaimed the doctor in a despairing tone. "If I tell him the whole awful truth, he will refuse to believe me."

Bessie raised her head and looked into her brother's eyes.

"Ewan, Gretel is a—a vampire."

"A vampire? Vampires are bats, sis."

She shook her head vigorously.

"No, Ewan, not all of them. There are some wretched human beings who so thirst for human blood——"

"Be careful, my dear, of what you are saying," warned Ewan.

"I tell you, Gretel is a vampire.

She nearly drained you of blood the other night. She made sure that you were asleep, and she thought I was, too. But I saw her!" cried the girl wildly.

Ewan let her go from his arms, backed off, and slumped into a chair, speechless for a moment.

"She's *crazy*. That's *all*," he pronounced with finality.

"No, Gillespie, she isn't," disputed the doctor. "She's as well poised and as sane as you or I."

"And you told me I'd been bitten by something that might ruin me body and soul!" disgustedly.

"It is true. An awful fate awaits you, unless——"

Ewan interrupted.

"And this awful fate?" he queried with an assumption of bored attention.

"And that fate is, Gillespie, that you are even now at her beck and call, unless constantly guarded by occult means. It is that when she has had her fill of your blood, and your body dies because it is quite, quite drained, you yourself will become a wandering night thing, that can not rest in peace even in the arms of Death, but must forever go on—undead—infecting those whom you love, as Gretel infected you."

Ewan stood up. He was colorless. His eyes were blazing.

"Bessie, do you believe this folderol?" he demanded between set teeth.

"Dale says it is so," began the girl.

The doctor gave a grieved exclamation.

"So you, too, have turned against me? Well, God has evidently decreed that I must carry my burden alone. And somewhere in the woods is hidden the body of what was once Gretel Armitage," he said solemnly. "It is my bounden duty to find that body and so do to it that the Evil which now animates it can no longer move it to obey its behests. Little as you may believe it, Gillespie, your own life in the hereafter depends entirely upon whether I am able to find her body," declared he in measured accents.

"How do you know she is dead?" demanded the artist truculently.

"Because she has frequently threatened to kill herself, in order to be freer to carry out her wicked designs," answered the doctor with marked and gentle patience.

"Why should she kill herself?" pursued Ewan.

"Because only by passing through the portals of Death can she gain the freedom which I denied her earthly body, at her own request."

"Still I do not understand."

"I see that I must tell you the whole story from the very beginning," said the doctor thoughtfully.

Ewan sat down with an air of patient resignation, but triumph shone in his eyes. At last the doctor was forced to yield and tell the fairy-tales with which he had been trying to stuff Bessie, Ewan told himself scornfully.

"Coffee, Bess," said he prosaically. "Have some coffee, doctor, before you begin. Now go to it! No interruptions."

CHAPTER 12

THE DEAD THAT WAKENED

"IT BEGAN in Munich," said the doctor. "In 1923. I'd gone there after the war, to assist in special researches bearing upon certain strange outbreaks of ghoulism in a number of adjacent hamlets. To explain my being asked to help our former enemies in this work, I may say that my studies and research along occult lines had given me sufficient material for a small pamphlet on the sporadic prevalence among peoples of a certain type of mental development, of vampirism and lycanthropy. This booklet

had come to the attention of a well-known German savant, Adolf Himmbeeren, in translated form, and he sent for me at the request of his confreres, who believed me better versed along occult lines than they.

"Professor Himmbeeren took me directly into the bosom of his family with the utmost hospitality, placing at my disposal all the splendid resources of his library and laboratory, of which I at once took full advantage. I found many books—in German, which rather retarded my reading, for with that language I was familiar only in its more colloquial terms—which opened vistas of weird and bizarre thought before my mental vision, and into these I delved, with the gracious assistance of the professor's charming motherless child, a lovely blond girl, named—Gretel."

Bessie breathed quicker, leaning against the table toward him, hazel eyes hungrily on his face, her strained attention plainly hanging on every word. The artist sat up in his chair, his brow slightly drawn as he regarded the doctor with hard scrutiny.

"Gretel," repeated the doctor slowly. "Gretel Himmbeeren. She seemed just a lovely slip of an innocent girl, and imperceptibly I came to lean upon her quick, intuitive grasp of the esoteric subjects I was studying, for her command of English was superb. She spoke it without accent, as she did French, Italian, Spanish and Russian. She was, in a word, an accomplished linguist, and I soon found that her knowledge of occult works was fully equal to my own. Due to her curiosity for the black magic which has been the bane of ignorant searchers and would-be magicians (she explained her interest on the ground of preparation to work against this widespread but unacknowledged evil), I found myself rapidly acquiring a fund of information from the archives not only of Germany, but of Italy, France, Spain and Russia.

"I was naturally grateful to this young girl for her profound interest in my research, and her enthusiastic co-operation whenever I stood in need of it, but there was not the slightest emotional slant in my feelings toward her. This was something she was unable to grasp; to her my gratitude, fervently expressed, was but the froth bubbling up from some deeper emotion, and she unhappily permitted herself to be carried away by her confidence in her own judgment, and became deeply—only too deeply—involved toward me in her affectional life.

"I became aware of this first when her father fell ill, and we had to take turns watching at his bedside, for his long delving into the occult and his early ignorance of the proper methods for protecting himself against malign influences had laid him open to certain very evil——" Dale stopped hesitatingly, then went on: "Suffice it to say that he was afraid to be alone, and feared also to be left with a nurse unversed in the occult. Both Gretel and I knew how to protect him while he slept, and only when one of us was present would he relax. It was during those night watches that Gretel's passion burst its bounds, plainly showing that she had long lost an impersonal attitude toward me. I had maintained mine toward her so scrupulously, even in my slightest thought, that her sudden revelation came to me as a distinct shock."

"And you, a physician, were totally unprepared for the consequences of propinquity," observed Ewan, scathingly, lips scornful.

"I've seen you treat your models with exactly that entire lack of personal feeling, Ewan," cried Bessie reproachfully. "You've been so submerged in your work that you've forgotten they were human beings even."

Ewan colored slightly.

"Your rebuke is a just one, sis," he admitted. "Pardon me, doctor, for my interruption. Perhaps I was hasty."

The doctor's dark eyes grew brighter. He even smiled.

"You are very excusable, Gillespie. And please let me assure you that I am honest when I say that to me it was both startling and disconcerting to have Gretel let down the safe bars of impersonality and open the windows of her soul toward me. It meant that I had to be guarded in every word and action toward her, for fear of misinterpretation. And that later I would have to hurt her—for I could discover no warmer feelings toward her than admiration and friendship, search my heart as I might.

"Gretel had often spoken to me of her longing for a pet of some kind. I sent to Paris for a Persian kitten, and while her father was ill, and before she had permitted me to read her feelings so plainly, this little creature arrived and I had the pleasure of presenting it to her. The trouble I had taken to give her pleasure must have been the opening wedge in persuading her that I was more interested than I had felt wise to express. She must, in fact, have taken my gift as a delicate indication from me of a warmer feeling, for it was immediately after this that she began to treat me more as a favored lover than a friend on an intimate but impersonal footing.

"While the professor lay on his death-bed, Gretel permitted him to understand that she would not be left unprotected. I felt myself trapped. But I could not find it in my heart to deny the dying man this consolation, when with a smile of contentment on his haggard countenance he joined our hands and blessed us. In that moment Gretel lifted her face to mine for the first kiss—and I—I gave it. Such a revulsion of feeling toward her took place within me at the intimate contact that physical sickness gripped me; I felt nauseated, and was horrified that the kiss of a lovely and loving girl should affect me in such manner. Little did I dream then why my soul, clean and uncontaminated by wilful evil, shrank from that caress.

"Into my sick ears she murmured her love. 'I would sell my very soul for your sake, Dale,' she whispered. Significant words, which at the time I hardly heeded. It was later that I was to realize what unutterably hideous things lay behind them.

"Now came the thing which has given Gretel her hold on me, a hold more powerful to bind me than steel chains could be. The deceased professor lay in his casket, surrounded by flowers, on the morning of the funeral. I was working in the laboratory on certain experiments which could not be held up, when Gretel, with white face and staring blue eyes, burst into the room. The little Persian cat had gotten into the parlor, and Gretel—knowing well what might happen—had not dared to go in after it herself.

" 'You gave it to me. The responsibility is yours, Dale. I dare not,' she said with trembling lips. Momentarily horrified though I was—for my occult studies had prepared me for such contingencies—my modern, common-sense mentality could not credit that possibility. I laughed. God help me, I *laughed!* Pushing her to one side gently, I went down into the parlor.

"The kitten was sunning itself at one window where the shade was up a trifle, letting in a broad beam of sunshine. Apart from that, the great apartment was in gloom, which seemed to center about the casket standing in the middle of the room, covered by flowers which shed a heavy perfume that was almost sickeningly sweet. I went toward the

kitten, calling to it coaxingly. The little thing rose, arching its back and waving its plumy tail, but it would not permit my approach. When I made a quick dash forward to put my hands upon it, the small creature slithered easily away from under my clumsy fingers and bounded across the room, springing with lithe grace *directly across the open casket.*"

The doctor's accents as he spoke these last words bore a tragic significance.

"A woman's scream rang out. Gretel, who had followed me, went down in a dead faint just on the threshold. The kitten ran across her prostrate form and out into the brighter rooms of the house. I stood for a moment, overwhelmed all at once by the realization of the horror of that curse which my knowledge of the occult told me was now upon that unfortunate house. Then I told myself furiously that I was a fool and an oaf. I went to Gretel's aid, picked up her unconscious body, and closed the room door with an uncontrollable shudder."

"Frankly, Dr. Armitage, I can see nothing in this incident to have roused you to such a fever of apprehension," objected Ewan, reaching for a match, and taking out his cigarette case, which he offered and the doctor rather impatiently refused.

Dale transfixed him with a harsh look, at which the artist squirmed uneasily.

"If I were to retail to you certain symptoms of some obscure and loathsome disease, would you feel the horror and repugnance that a brother physician might, who understood every reference and its inevitable conclusion?" asked the doctor pointedly.

Ewan's shoulders shrugged, but he continued to maintain his loftily scornful air.

"I think I remember something like that," Bessie contributed, thoughtfully. "A cat's jumping over a corpse."

The doctor nodded.

"Ancient superstitions state that this makes a vampire of the unhappy dead," he explained.

Ewan threw up both hands in a gesture of polite resignation.

"So you're going to carry us into the realms of superstition!" said he, with a light laugh. "Bessie, don't take the doctor too seriously. He's amusing himself at our expense."

"Hear me out, Gillespie. Then perhaps even you may admit that I am not amusing myself at your expense," said the doctor sternly. "That evening, after the funeral services, I made preparations for an all-night vigil with the professor's body, which was not to be put into the receiving vault until the next day. Gretel shut herself into her room, leaving everything to me. I had been busy all that afternoon and early evening, with wax and certain aromatic herbs, dipping candles with which I purposed to light and fumigate that funeral chamber. I had been unable to procure wild roses, for it was wintertime and none were in blossom, naturally. Neither could I get garlic, although I sent a maid to scour the city markets. I had been obliged to resort to whatever methods lay within my immediate power to prepare. Of the efficiency of these I was not myself persuaded.

"It was with mixed feelings of incredulity, apprehension, and intense curiosity that I closed the door of that chamber of the dead behind me, when darkness had settled down upon the city, and made ready for my long, lonely watch. A spirit lamp with coffee was ready, in case I felt drowsy, for it was all-important that my mind should be kept at its highest power, in case of some dread need that would call for all I could give of alertness. I lighted the sweet-smell-

ing candles I had prepared, and welcomed with inward satisfaction the changing atmosphere of the room, which—until they began burning dimly, sending out their medicated, fragrant aroma—had smelled horridly of the presence of death and decay."

"Ugh!" Ewan shuddered uncontrollably. A look of involuntary satisfaction flitted across the doctor's dark face, as if he were pleased with the effect of his words upon the other man's sensibilities.

"Nothing happened until almost 3 o'clock in the morning," he went on, after a momentary pause. "It was then that I became suddenly aware that the atmosphere of the room was altering subtly; charging, as it were, with something potently malevolent in its tendencies toward me, toward that dead lying there so silent and white, and—stranger yet—toward Gretel Himmbeeren, who must have been wakeful and terrified at that crucial moment in her own room, where she had chosen to lock herself in. My aromatic candles were guttering in their sockets.

"There was a pulsing (regular and monotonous like the dizzy drumming of trance just before or after taking chloroform) in the etheric particles of the atmosphere surrounding me, that brought about a heaviness of my mental faculties, which I realized must now be awakened to a more than usually acute alertness, or I, and Gretel, and that dead, too, would become the playthings of forces of Evil, the naming of which is only too often to bring them about one," darkly.

"The wind is rising," murmured Bessie, hazel eyes all at once wide and staring like a sleep-walker's. "I can hear it coming over the tree-tops. It is whispering in the branches—getting louder and louder—and wilder. It is roaring among the forest giants, and they must be bending before it like grass under the autumn winds. Oh, Dale, look! Look at that window!"

The girl had risen from her seat and was pointing with stiff forefinger across at the window of Ewan's room. The artist turned in a flash, as did the other man.

"It was Gretel!" declared Bessie in agitation and alarm. "I saw her plainly. She stood looking at us, and laughing. Dale, she isn't dead. She must be alive yet. Oh, stop her before she can harm herself!"

The brave girl dashed to the cabin door, followed by the two men. Accompanied by the doctor, she ran around one side of the cabin, Ewan going in the opposite direction. But when they met, none of them had seen Gretel, although the doctor found footprints under Ewan's window, with deeply indented heel-prints, and Bessie's shoes were wide-heeled, not narrow and French-heeled.

"I saw her," insisted Bessie, much disturbed. "She looked at me so furiously that it terrified me. She must be hiding near us now, behind some bush or tree. Gretel!" she called, impulsively.

For a moment the startled three thought they heard a mocking laugh from the thick woods. The doctor's face was pallid, for it was impossible to locate the sound. His dark eyes were deep hollows of misery in his white countenance.

"She has managed to elude us this time," he admitted, his keen gaze seeking the forest vistas this way and that for the flash of color that would have been Gretel's sport dress. "And it must be that she is alive. That is why you heard the wind, Bessie. She would hardly be able to get across the stream without calling to her aid those Dark Powers that so recently made a frozen pathway for her over the running water. And now again," he broke off, with a gesture toward the stream, "she has come to this side of the brook."

His eyes lifted to the tree-tops, but they were motionless in the fresh morning air.

"I can *hear* the wind," persisted Bessie, puzzled, after being persuaded by her own eyes that the branches of the forest giants were still, although that ominous roaring continued loudly.

"There is mischief afoot," admitted the doctor, unwillingly. "I myself do not know in what direction Gretel may be able to turn her evil gifts. Shall we go inside again? I must complete my story before other interruptions occur, for both of you must be able to see Today in the light of Yesterday, so that you can understand better what lies before us in Tomorrow," bitterly.

THE trio went inside and seated themselves about the table as before. But at the doctor's suggestion, Bessie pulled down the burlap she had tacked up over Ewan's window, but that he had drawn aside that morning when he rose.

"I believe I was telling you," the doctor began again, "that I felt a thickening, a turbidity, of the atmosphere in that death chamber, about 3 o'clock of the morning. I hastily lighted the spirit lamp—it burned with an unearthly blue flame that struck me unpleasantly at the moment, although that was its usual color—and put over it the saucepan with coffee. Then I advanced toward the casket to observe if any changes had taken place in that dead which lay so silently there.

"I turned my electric flash upon that dead face, and staggered back as if struck by a furious hand. For the dead eyes were open, observing me with a malicious intentness and a measured calculation that sent sickly shudderings down my spinal column!"

"Cataleptic trance!" jerked out Ewan distastefully. "Why try to create this ghostly atmosphere, Dr. Armitage, when the condition of that supposedly dead man was a more or less ordinary one, well known to science?"

"It was *not* a cataleptic trance," retorted the doctor with heat. "Will you be courteous enough to hear me out, Gillespie?"

The artist drew down the corners of his mouth but said nothing, and the physician, after a slight pause, went on.

CHAPTER 13

LIPS OF THE DEAD

"I COULD not, at the first horrid shock, credit the witness of my own senses, so I collected myself, breathing thickly in that turgid atmosphere that seemed swollen now with crowding heaviness that made it difficult to draw a free breath, loaded as the air was with the odor from the candles, and that strange smell of death that had now returned more strongly than ever. I turned the flash lamp full upon the professor's dead face and leaned over steadily to apprize myself of whatever the situation might be. I told myself that I had been mistaken, for the waxen eyelids were closed with the immobility of death over the once kindly eyes. Then——

"The yellowing lids quivered. They began to move upward, to fold back with a horrid, purposeful steadiness. The white eyeballs were soon showing about those gleaming, glassy eyes, as they rolled upward slowly, horribly, to meet my frozen, shrinking gaze. Professor Himmbeeren had become that unutterably awful Thing to which he had been condemned by his own reckless meddling with the Forces of Evil before he knew how to protect himself; condemned because that lack of spiritual armor had made him all too susceptible to the occult line of influence traced across his

quiescent body when the Persian kitten, plaything and instrument of relentless Fate, leaped over his dead form.

"As the awful import of all this came home to my sick soul, I tore my almost paralyzed gaze from that of the now grinning Thing in the casket, and brought all my mental faculties to a point, to stop at once the ghastly sequence of events that now seemed shaping. Strange as it may seem to you, I—theoretically believing in the possibility of the thing that had now taken place before me—had been unable to credit its practical possibility. So have many human souls been lost, that have walked the forbidden paths; believing, they did not prepare for what their studies must have told them were possible contingencies.

"I had remained on guard that night to see that the dead man's body remained undisturbed, but the very reason of my presence in that room had not penetrated sufficiently into my mind for me to have provided myself with the means of putting a stop to any such occult manifestations of evil as had now become evident. I needed garlic, cloves. I should have been prepared with a sharpened stake, a keen-edged surgical knife, a wooden mallet. Even the simple precaution of a crucifix on the dead lips I had neglected. Of these essentials I had quite nothing. And that was not the moment to seek them. I stood there helpless, unable to send into the peace of real death that Thing that now stirred softly, horridly, in the casket, as it took completer command of its new domicile and future instrument, the dead man's body.

"I stood there in dire stress, neither daring to retreat and leave the Thing to its own ghastly devices while I hunted for what I had need. nor daring approach it again. for I was only weak man, and *it* was—but it is better not to breathe that terrible name, for the very reverberations of those sounds will set the delicate ether about us to quivering and quaking, and upon those waves of vibration *it* can the better reach us now," shuddered the doctor.

Ewan sucked in his breath with a gasping sound.

"As a teller of ghost stories, Armitage," said he disgustedly, "you are certainly without peer. I am absolutely scared into shivers. All of which may be highly gratifying to you, but I resent having my sister terrified into convulsions by this yarn you insist upon getting off your chest."

"Shall I stop, Bessie? Is it too much for you?"

Bessie shook her head emphatically.

"No, Dale. If Ewan doesn't care to listen, he can leave us. I intend to hear all you feel you can tell," she declared.

Ewan grunted in disgust but showed no signs of leaving them. The doctor waited for a moment, then picked up the thread of his story once more.

"While I stood there, listening with the utmost loathing to the soft stirrings in the coffin, and trying to collect my scattered wits and overcome my instinctive hatred and disgust as well, I must confess, as my fear and dread, the parlor door sprang open and a white-robed apparition came swiftly over the threshold as if drawn by some power other than that of its own volition. I cried out sharply.

"And then I saw that it was Gretel who advanced toward me like a woman in a trance, her blue eyes alight with an ecstasy of horror and loathing, mingled with exultation that was impossible for me to understand at the time. She swept toward me, then veered sharply to one side until she had reached the casket. She began to bend over it, in that unearthly silence and tenseness, broken

only by the stirrings from within the coffin.

"And as she bent forward, that which had been gathering its horrid forces together in the dead man's body lifted the rigid form until the ghoulish and distorted face was staring at me over the edge of the coffin! My God, my God, I can see it now!"

The doctor broke off with a gasping for breath, as if his throat muscles were constricted and he fighting for air.

"Dale! Poor Dale!"

"My dear, forgive my weakness." He mastered himself by a supreme effort. "Speaking of that unutterably fulsome and nauseous Thing that rose into sight beyond Gretel's stooping figure brought back to me all the horror of that awful night!"

"Go on!" It was Ewan's sharp voice that brought the doctor back to the present. "Get on with this yarn, for heaven's sake. I'm glad for my sister's sake that it's daylight now, and not night."

"As that malignant Thing lifted the dead body by imperceptible but steady force into a sitting posture, Gretel leaned more and more, until she was lying supine across the coffin, her flaxen hair tumbling in abandon among the fading flowers of the funeral wreaths with their sickeningly heavy odors. There she lay, twisted so that her head tilted backward, her white throat exposed in a long, lovely line, upon which the glaring, hell-blasting eyes of that abhorrent Monstrosity from the Pit were now fixed with avid, unslaked cupidity.

"The Thing was so sure of itself and its potent influence over both of us, that it disdained to pay me more than that first scornful, slighting attention, and centered itself, with gaping, slobbering lips, in all the potentiality of its vile, obscene being, upon that feast which awaited its ghoulish pleasure.

"I stood there like a bit of sculptured marble, incapable of moving hand or foot; horrified into a muscular paralysis which made quite impossible the co-ordination of my will and my limbs. And so it came to pass that I was the unwilling, the nauseated, the wretched witness of Gretel Himbeeren's undoing. Chained to the spot by my miserably unresponding body, I was obliged to see those gloating eyes roll over the lovely face and bosom and rest with hungry, urgent triumph upon the white neck.

"I had to see, while my soul sickened within to the point of physical nausea, the drooling mouth approaching the helpless girl's flesh, to desecrate it so horribly. My quivering nerves rebelled, but I could not even enjoy the respite that might have been mine could I have closed my eyes, so rigid had my entire body become.

"I saw the withdrawal of those wet lips from the teeth that had grown like needles, so pointed sharp did they glisten. I saw the mumbling of the girl's white skin between them, with its sickening mockery of a lover's caress. Until all at once—as if the Thing could no longer endure the delicious agony of anticipation—the teeth met, and her body, held now by two long, rigid arms, shook convulsively as the unspeakable Horror sucked rapaciously at her life's blood.

"God! God!"

"And you stood there, you miserable coward!" snapped out the artist, all at once touched to the verge of credulity by the doctor's sincere accents and his obvious suffering. "And let that poor, lovely girl be raped of her life-blood! Jove, but you *are* a poor apology for a man!"

BESSIE had not moved. Horrified at this climax to the doctor's tragic story, she sat as if frozen, tears dimming her hazel eyes and creeping down her pale cheeks as she suffered vicariously with him.

"I do not blame you for your scorn," said the doctor sadly. "Only too many times since that fatal night have I told myself the same. Yet—the fact remains—I was as helpless that moment as if I had been chained with weighted gyves on every limb. I am not to be blamed if I had my muscles contract and they refused obedience. Yet—I forgive you for your harsh words, because I can readily understand how difficult it is to realize what my situation was.

"Well—I was fettered by inhibitions too powerful for my weak will to overcome. It seemed to me that centuries passed before the Thing removed its gaping, flabby mouth, drooling now with hot crimson, from Gretel's tender flesh. It let her body drop callously, for it was surfeited with its long drink. It rolled those gleaming, hellish orbs upon me as I stood paralyzed. Something like a scornful smile twisted the distorted features and left that wry expression permanently as the Thing stared at me.

"I could bear no more. My nerves had been drained of all surplus resources, as had Gretel's veins been drained of much blood. When the ghoulish Thing slid supinely back into the casket with the slithering movement and whishing sound of a serpent, my vocal chords all at once found freedom from tension, and I uttered a loud shriek, and then another, and fell forward upon my face, unconscious.

"The servants rushed in and found us there: Gretel upon the floor, paler than the dead lying in the casket with wry, twisted face; I on the other side of the coffin, in the first delirium of what became a raging brain fever——"

"Which explains, without further words, your whole obsession," interrupted the artist, with a nervous, half-angry look at his sister, upon whose pallid face tears were still wet. "For heaven's sake, cut out this ghastly tale, Armitage. It's unnecessary. The whole business was only too obviously a hallucination, due to approaching illness."

Dr. Armitage shook his head slowly, mournfully.

"No, Gillespie. It was the cause, not the result," he insisted, firm lips in a determined line. "And now I must insist upon your listening to all the story, since you have heard so much and are yet unconvinced. If Gretel were here, in her better mood, she would verify and confirm all that I have told, and—and have yet to tell."

Ewan rose jerkily from his chair.

"Well, I suppose Bessie will insist upon having it all," said he, disgustedly. "As for me, I've heard enough. Your wife isn't here, you see, to verify your hallucinations. And I, for one, don't intend to listen to any such ghoulish yarns in her absence. I'm sure she would agree with me that you'd had an hallucination, due to approaching illness."

He went out of the living room into his own room, deliberately pulling the door closed.

Bessie stretched her hands across the table.

"Go on, Dale. Oh, my poor dear, how you must have suffered! And poor Gretel! I can not blame her, now that I know——"

"Wait, Bessie. Do not pity her too much," warned the doctor. "Wait until you have heard all."

With fresh anticipation of new horrors yet to come, Bessie sat up straighter, again resting her round chin in her palms as she listened intently.

"I knew nothing of what happened, until I came out of my stupor and delirium, later. I had a severe siege of it, naturally. And during my illness I had no more devoted nurse than Gretel, who spent every moment at

my bedside as soon as she was physically able. This made it more difficult for me to tell her what I felt I must in honor; that while I admired and esteemed and—now—pitied her, I did not care for her as a man must care for the woman he wishes to make his wife."

Bessie's face grew warmer under the doctor's look.

"And I found it impossible, finally, to tell her this," confessed Dr. Armitage reluctantly. "The fact that I had given her the Persian kitten; that it had been I who had inadvertently sent it leaping across her father's coffin; that I had, moreover, remained a witness, although unwilling, of her initiation into vampirism; all these things were against me. She managed to make me feel that I owed her everything a man could possibly owe a loving woman. I was helpless; chained by my conviction that no matter how innocent I was, yet something of blame was mine for what had happened. By the fetters my conscience bound about me, Gretel drew me on, and a day came when we were pronounced man and wife."

"Perhaps—if you had loved her——?"

"Bessie, that might have made me her weak victim, later. I must get on with this . . . On our wedding night I felt that I had made what reparation I could, by giving her my name, the promise of my constant protection. I could go no farther. I went into the room where she awaited me, lovely in gleaming white satin, her flaxen hair undulating loosely about her shoulders, and told her clumsily that while I would devote every fiber of my being to restoring her to the full freedom of a clean soul, I could not give her the physical return which she certainly must feel her own passion merited. In plain words, I would protect her and keep her from harming others, for her own sake, but I could never be a husband to her.

"Good God, what a living fury sprang into unsuspected existence at my ultimatum! At first she clung to me, curling her body about me, writhing like a serpent into my arms, her fingers in my hair and on my face. When she found me unstirred, she changed her tactics, and reproached me with having wilfully won her heart only to crush her. When that again failed to move me, she screamed out her innermost soul, laid bare her deepest secrets before my appalled eyes!

"Then I learned that she, in her passion for evil, had mastered languages only that she might delve into forbidden tomes of base knowledge. Too light-natured to undertake the study of the deeper undertones of occultism, she let her feet stray into dubious paths. She found a road that took her by imperceptible degrees down to a door that opened into Hell," said the doctor, his voice lowering as if he feared to be overheard.

"Dale, how dreadful! Oh, the poor thing!"

"Perhaps I am hard toward her, Bessie, because I know how evil she is and how she has wilfully fostered the growth of darkness in her own soul, and bidden welcome to whatever spirit approached her, provided it catered to her own ends.

"Down that path Gretel had walked with wilful eyes wide open, for she discovered that it is easier to slip down than to climb, and she had not the perseverance and courage for the upward struggle. She had also opened her soul to the influence of a certain evil entity—I must not say that name aloud—a certain—suffice it to say that she became animated at times by that Power to which she had willingly bowed her proud head, and it was at the intimation of that Power that she had made me understand that she wanted the kitten, and that same awful power had promised me to her if she would put the little

thing into the funeral chamber, thus opening the way for It to utilize her own father's dead body. Incredible? Not to the evil thing that Gretel had become.

"In her fury of disappointment, she discovered all this to me, so filling me with horror that the mere thought of her kiss was sufficient to fill me with sick nausea. She was the more bitter, because that Power to which she had given herself had taken toll of her, as I have told you, at the very first opportunity, planning no doubt to take me, through her, later. Now she was marked by her terrible and ruthless master, and would remain a living fountain of blood for his unslaking thirst, and at her death she could not die, but would join the sad ranks of those whom we call vampires; forced to prey upon her nearest and dearest to keep alive the spirit of evil that would occupy her helpless body.

"Her feeling of rage against what she now termed her useless sacrifice almost consumed her. She called down against that dread Power all the evil of which her strange knowledge had given her cognizance. She invoked against me all the pride of her proud nature; all the strength of her physical passion; all the cunning in her twisted brain that might serve to swerve my standards of right and wrong and deliver me into her hands.

"In vain. I had seen all only too clearly. There is in my soul the upward striving for the triumph of Light which forbids, in every fiber of my being, any compromise with the powers of Darkness. Once convinced of my determination, Gretel became suddenly meek, but not before she had warned me in her fury that she would yet make me her very own, in a far different sense from what she had expected when she believed herself loved by me. And she warned me that she would, to keep herself strongly alive for my future torment, and to prepare her own body against other visits from that dread and greedy-lipped master of hers, take toll of other human beings when and where she could.

"After that there was but one thing to do, and I did it. I kept constant watch over her. At night I arranged so that she should never be beyond surveillance. Yet she has evaded me, as that newspaper clipping told you. To save that poor child from a wretched fate, I was obliged to perform the bizarre but merciful acts that gave the poor thing's soul peace.

"In her better moments Gretel agreed to my precautions, but she would undo them by telling acquaintances that I was brutal and jealous, until I often found my hands tied by her evil cunning. Your brother, for example, considers her a persecuted angel," he remarked abruptly.

"And now, Bessie, we are almost at the end of the story. We came out here, after I found that she had impregnated that poor child, with the intention of working the thing out by ourselves, away from other people. I knew that this might conceivably end by my becoming her victim, but I had taken precautions to leave a will which provided for such a contingency. I refer, Bessie, to the cleanly practise of cremation, which would put an end, if universally practised, to very nearly all the hauntings and the cases of vampirism and lycanthropy which arise from time to time.

"We had hardly been here a month, before you and your brother came. Gretel was aflame with obscene thirst; it had been some time since she had tasted blood. When you told me you intended to remain near us all summer, an intolerable psychic apprehension amounting to actual pain, arose within me. I struck at the wooden railing with my fist,

bruising it in the hope of inducing a physical pain that would deaden my intuitional alarm. To think of you, so unsuspecting, waiting for her to pounce upon you——!

"That night I told her calmly that I would kill her with my own hands, rather than let her continue her evil courses. She laughed at me. She reminded me that she would be freer dead than living. Then I foolishly told her that I had prepared to lay that evil spirit and free her soul from the curse she had herself brought upon it.

"And then she was afraid, and became crafty. And now—my God, I have let her escape me! She will be able to take flight as she has so often threatened, and she will hide her body, and she will roam free over the face of the earth. And your poor brother, my Bessie, has been infected, and she can call him to her at will!"

What Gretel did to accomplish her revenge will be narrated in the closing chapters of this story, in next month's WEIRD TALES. The tale rises to a crashing climax.

ELDORADO

(Reprint)

By EDGAR ALLAN POE

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
"Shadow," said he,
"Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?"

"Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,"
The shade replied,
"If you seek for Eldorado!"

A CHECK of the thirty most popular stories published in WEIRD TALES reveals that you, the readers, insist on the unusual, and that you demand fine skill in the telling; for there is no truer index to your likes and dislikes than a careful tabulation and study of the stories that you have stamped with the seal of your approval. Considerably more than 300 stories have been offered to you in the year and a half that WEIRD TALES has been published by its present editors; and your thirty favorites, therefore, may be said to represent the cream of all the good stories published during that time. Many stories, equally as strange as those included among the thirty, have failed to reach this select group of favorite stories, because of a less adroit presentation of story materials, or because the personality of the author was not sufficiently stamped on his work. For one fact that stands out very prominently in studying these "most popular" stories is the high percentage of them that bear the seal of the author's personality, that are written in a distinctive style that shows individuality and genius. Stories of the fine literary merit of Munn's *The Werewolf of Ponkert*, Price's *The Stranger From Kurdistan* and Lovecraft's *The Outsider* rank very high in the list; and Nictzin Dyalhis, who has probably the most distinctively individual and "different" style of any of the WEIRD TALES authors, heads the entire list of favorite stories with his two tales of cosmic space. Colter, Long, Owen, Price, Lovecraft, La Spina, Burks—all have distinctive styles that are immediately recognizable, and all seven are in the list of favorites. Quinn has five stories in the select list; Dyalhis, Lovecraft, Colter and Schlossel each have two; and two more are the joint product of Will Smith and R. J. Robbins.

As to the themes—you, the readers, have included a wide range of subjects among your favorite stories, demanding only that the plots be weird and unusual, *and well and thrillingly told.* We shall try to follow your likes, as expressed in this poll of your favorite stories, and give you an increasing number of splendidly-written stories stamped with the personality and genius of the authors; and indeed, it is doubtful if a finer list of thirty stories could be drawn from the files of any magazine than this list of your favorite stories in the recent numbers of WEIRD TALES.

The list of favorites contains four weird-astronomical stories; three tales of devil-worship; four werewolf tales; one Egyptian-spider story; three tales of communication with the dead, and two ghost-stories; two tales of underground tomb-horror; one reincarnation story; three tales of weird surgery (including De Las Cuevas' Aztec torture-tale); two weird tales of Atlantis;

two weird-scientific tales of strange rays. There are four tales of strange monsters in the list—a snake-tale, an ape-tale, a tale of giant leeches, and a tale of a strange sea-monster. Then there are several unusual tales that do not fall under any of these headings, such as *Lukundoo,* Edward Lucas White's story of little chattering heads that grew out of a man's side; and Frank Owen's bizarre Chinese story of sweetness and light, *The Wind That Tramps the World.* But regardless of their position in the magazine, the truly distinctive stories, those that are stamped with personality and genius, have brought an instant response from you, the readers, whether they were cover-design tales like *Whispering Tunnels* and *The Werewolf of Ponkert,* or whether they were buried in the magazine without even an art heading, as were *The Stranger From Kurdistan* and *Dr. Jerbot's Last Experiment,* both of which were well up in the list of the readers' thirty favorite stories in WEIRD TALES.

Writes Mrs. Joseph C. Murphy, of Washington, D. C.: "I like the latest number of WEIRD TALES especially well. That serial story of the artist and his sister and the doctor and his wife in the deep forest *(Fettered)* is one of the best I have ever seen. There is a fineness of atmosphere about it that makes my hair stand on end."

Wesley W. Dillion, of Minneapolis, writes: "It is a long time since I have come across a magazine which so thoroughly combined pleasure with profit as WEIRD TALES. It is small praise to say that there is not a dull story in it—it is a perfect model of what such a magazine ought to be."

Writes Lieutenant-Commander P. J. Searles, from the Boston Navy Yard: "May I compliment you on your magazine? I read very few fiction magazines, as my reading time is occupied largely with technical matters relating to astronomy and engineering, but WEIRD TALES is always on my list. In particular I enjoy your stories of abnormal psychology, madness, and perversion (not, of course, in the moral sense, as WEIRD TALES does not use such stories), rather than those which are pseudo-scientific. As one single reader, I hope you will concentrate more on stories of the mind, in which I also mean those of ghost and super- or extra-natural events."

G. Gordon Dewey, of Cedar Rapids, Nebraska, writes: "I have read the WEIRD TALES magazine ever since its advent in the magazine world, and have yet to see one to approach it for sheer good fiction. It holds one's interest from cover to cover. May you always have as high a standard of good stories in it. My only regret is that it does not appear oftener."

Writes Mrs. W. F. Hawkins, of Augusta, Maine: "I have selected *Fettered,* the beginning of the new serial for this month, as my favorite story for the current (July) issue. It is not only weird and scary, but it doesn't leave a bad impression on one's mind after reading. Greye La Spina can write a weird, uncanny story without making it positively horrible as Seabury Quinn does in his *House of Horror.* I like weird stories but I don't like anything ugly or sordid."

Lester Wallace Reed, of Pasadena, California, writes to the Eyrie: "I have been an enthusiastic reader of WEIRD TALES for over two years, and providing that Seabury Quinn keeps Jules de Grandin on the job, well, that means two years more. *The House of Horror* was a corker!"

The House of Horror finds many enthusiastic backers, but here is a letter of vigorous opposition, from Frederick John Greve of Brooklyn: "I have prided myself on being proof against any degree of terror, but *The House of Horror* was too much for me. It holds your attention spellbound while

reading it, as a snake does a bird, but leaves a feeling of revulsion afterward."

Writes Frank Lewis, of Haddonfield, New Jersey: "*Through the Vortex,* in the July issue, exactly suits my demand for the brand of fiction your magazine represents. It is this type of story—absolutely new and bizarre in plot yet supported by the possibility of scientific fact—that most appeals to me. This plot, dealing in the most plausible manner with a small world formed naturally at the zero point of the Earth's winds, is brand new, and entertaining in every detail. For the same reason a story of some months back, *The Brain in the Jar,* interested me more than ordinarily."

L. Mosdell, of Chicago, writes to The Eyrie: "The singular and outstanding tale of the July issue, in my estimation, was that by Clare Winger Harris entitled *A Runaway World*—a vision far beyond our present sense of comprehension as to its theme, and one that might prove its worth with time."

Margaret Harper, of Claymont, Delaware, writes to The Eyrie: "I consider *The House of Horror* the best story in the July issue, and the next best, *Through the Vortex.* Doesn't Greye La Spina's serial, *Fettered,* start out splendidly! And so terribly mystifying! I can hardly wait for next month's issue to break the suspense."

"About two years ago I was suffering from acute literary ennui," writes R. Gladstone Reeves, of Brooklyn. "A friend suggested WEIRD TALES. Since taking, relatives and friends have noticed a steady improvement in my disposition. WEIRD TALES is certainly a boon to lovers of the bizarre, and I can positively recommend it as a household remedy to all who are afflicted with chronic lack of interest in current fiction."

What is your favorite story in the current issue? Four stories ran almost even in the voting for most popular story in the July number: 1, *Through the Vortex,* by Donald Edward Keyhoe; 2, *A Runaway World,* by Clare Winger Harris; 3, the first part of *Fettered,* Greye La Spina's new serial; and 4, *The House of Horror,* by Seabury Quinn.

MY FAVORITE STORIES IN THE SEPTEMBER WEIRD TALES ARE:

Story	Remarks
(1)----------	----------
(2)----------	----------
(3)----------	----------

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(1)---------- Why? ----------

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The Bird of Space

(Continued from page 306)

was. It would have been easy to drug him without his knowing, when he drowsed. And surely, without that, he would have been able to play the part of a man, to make a hopeless attempt at rescue—but his muscles were limp, his bones as if turned to water. Yet in the end he forced himself to raise his head, and to crawl forward, ever so little.

A mass of blackness blocked his vision. Below this cloud, or fog, or *whatever* it might be, darted and flashed and disappeared the green eyes of Gorlog. And even as he turned directly toward Alison, who still crept faintly and painfully forward, there was a sudden motion of the great, black, shapeless mass so near, a sudden puff of air, a twisting of the lines that marked it from the star-strewn sky, and a sudden flashing out of the darkness of two near, brightly burning stars—*or were they eyes?* Then something massive, soft yet ponderous swept down from above upon Alison, flattening him against the rock.

In the instant, he expected nothing less than to be crushed to death. And in that instant he screamed.

His scream sank to a moan which sounded pitiful in his own ears, as his strength forsook him. He felt himself sinking into a deep swoon, and as he lost the knowledge of everything, words came as from a great distance to his fainting ears, words which yet he knew were screamed in fury by the green-faced man:

"Fool! Imbecile! Interpreter! You have gotten yourself crushed to death on purpose! Could you not see where the Bird of Space was alighting, that you should creep there, and howl and yell your death cry from beneath him, so that I have only five to take to Furos?"

Alison felt his breath come hard, his heart pound in his breast. The weight which had settled down upon him grew heavier, and not to be borne. He had not yet felt the full burden of it, then, and when he did——

He knew for a fleeting instant the extremity of terror, and fainted dead away.

For the second time in his life, Alison returned from deep unconsciousness to the knowledge of life. As on the morning after his kidnaping, when he had opened his eyes in the cave, he felt that eons had swept over him. For a moment he expected to see the dark rock walls of Castle Rock hemming him in, as he opened his eyes. The soreness in his limbs and body was lifted from him, and he was on the verge of hysteria, then, for his eyes opened upon the stars and a keen, cold wind blew upon his face. He was alone, on the top of the rock. And he lay at his full length in a slight depression—which had saved him from being crushed to death.

He sat up. He craned his eyes toward the north, where the large white star and the small red one had fallen a little farther toward the west. And either his vision blurred, or as he looked the large white star was for a fleeting instant blotted from his view, as though it were briefly eclipsed by a nearer thing that passed that way in the night.

He looked about him, at the bare, naked rock, desolate in the starlight as though it reared its summit on a lifeless world. He shivered once more, and once more drew closer the

silk folds of his dressing gown. The greatest craving of his life swept over him—to get down to the homes of men.

Stumbling, he got to his feet. He would find a way down. Tomorrow he would be with his kind. He would tell them—he felt for the little notebook in his pocket, and it was there. But he would not show it to anyone. He would tell them he had been kidnaped from the train and had wakened in a bandit's cave. Let them explain the rest; there would be some plausible explanation concocted—a plausible explanation was always forthcoming.

He would feel his way carefully before he told them anything at all. For who would ever believe him? What did he believe, himself? That he had been in the hands of an East Indian fakir, a madman who had once been in a side-show, and who had kidnaped him, hypnotized him, and disappeared? The experience of the night had ended in a swoon. It was already dreamlike. Dreamlike, and far away.

But as he went, his eyes filled with tears so that he could hardly see his way. He was weak with exhaustion, and he was thinking of the girl in red, and of the dark star. And slowly, as he went, his heart filled with a longing for revenge, and with a motive. So long as he went his ways upon the Earth in the light of the sun, he would not forget to watch for the man with the green face, who would come back again if his story was true. He would not forget the girl in red, nor the dying star where dwelt overlords and—cattle.

The astounding adventures of the green-faced man and his captives in the cattle-pens of the dark star, and the pursuit of Gorlog and the girl in red by Alison, will be narrated in

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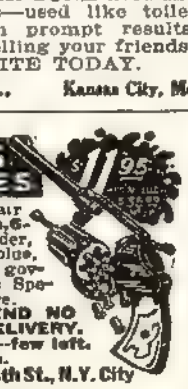

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Across Space

(Continued from page 322)

its center for some distance, shutting off view of the bottom. So we left our hiding place and crawled along the edge to a spot where we had a complete view of the bottom, though there were no sheltering shrubs at our new position.

But we forgot that in the intense interest of the sight below. The light seemed to emanate from a single point some distance above the crater's bottom, and though we could see but imperfectly by it, we made out the disk at once. I shall call it that for want of a better name. It was a stupendous circle, smooth and flat, a half-mile in diameter, covering the most of the crater's floor, and absolutely smooth and unbroken of surface.

Grouped around it were a number of low buildings, hardly visible in the dim light. And our eyes caught movement on the floor of the abyss—a continual flowing movement that we could hardly perceive, that seemed to circulate through the buildings and around the disk.

I JERKED out my watch and noted that it was two minutes after midnight. If the ray was operated four minutes earlier each night, as it had been so far, then according to our calculations it must be almost time for it to begin. And I heard Dr. Whitley's voice, without turning, "You see now that they can only send up that ray when Mars crosses its path. It would be impossible to tilt that disk, or to aim the ray in any different direction."

I did not answer, for at that instant the first gigantic sound pealed out, the clanging note of the gong we had heard the night before. It did not startle us this time, though it seemed far louder to our ears, welling up

from the crater in a flooding fountain of deafening sound.

Again it rang out, and even as we had expected, the chanting began and swelled out and died, swelled out again and again ceased, and now we waited with tense nerves the ray itself.

There was no delay, for the third bell-note clanged at once, and simultaneously the great shaft of crimson light sprang into terrific being, flashing forth from the surface of the disk and stabbing out across the millions of miles of space to the red planet that swung above us!

Nor were we blinded this time, as before, for we had remembered to look at it from between our fingers, until its radiance became bearable. Now the chant swelled out once more, in triumph, and for the first time I saw clearly the crater's bottom, lit up by the red ray's lurid light. And, too, I saw the things that chanted!

They were human in shape, it seemed, for I could see a great multitude of heads gathered about the disk in a thick circle, standing in apparent motionlessness. I turned eagerly to my companion, to ask if he had seen also.

But that question I never uttered, for as I whirled around to Dr. Whit-

(Continued on next page)

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ley, my eyes met a sight that froze the words on my lips, in sheer surprize and terror. Winging out of the air behind my unsuspecting companion was a great white thing with flapping wings, that seemed for a moment to be a giant white bat with a human face. In one horror-stricken glance I saw the shadowy white wings, the thin, spindling body, with taloned hands that were grasping for Whitley's throat from behind, then the face held my gaze like a dreadful magnet, a face that was high and cruel and thin-featured, with deep-set, darkly-lustrous eyes, a face of a deathly white, a *repulsive* white, the white of a snake's belly! *And the ears were long and ropelike!* The taloned hands were descending toward my companion, and I gave an awful scream, a scream that was shut off in my throat by other cold, hard hands that gripped me from behind, and pinioned me.

I felt myself being raised into the air, a great pair of wings flapping somewhere behind me; I was being carried over the crater's edge, and floating down, down, down——

The shaft of red light seemed to snap out suddenly—or was it my brain darkening? I heard the clang of the great bell, then dimly, out of the unconsciousness that was rapidly overtaking me, I seemed to hear the sound of a mighty, chanting throng swell up and meet me, from far below, exultant, triumphant! Then a flood of darkness and silence rolled over my mind, and I knew no more.

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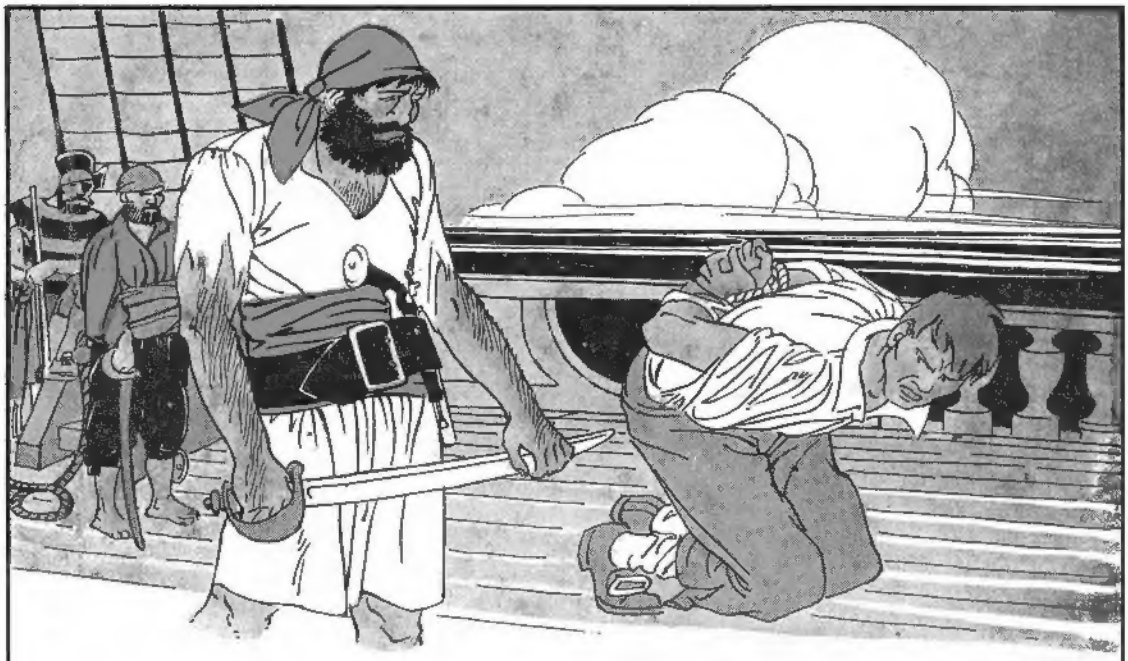

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